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THE NEW YORKER

OCT. 24, 2005

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THE NEW YORKER

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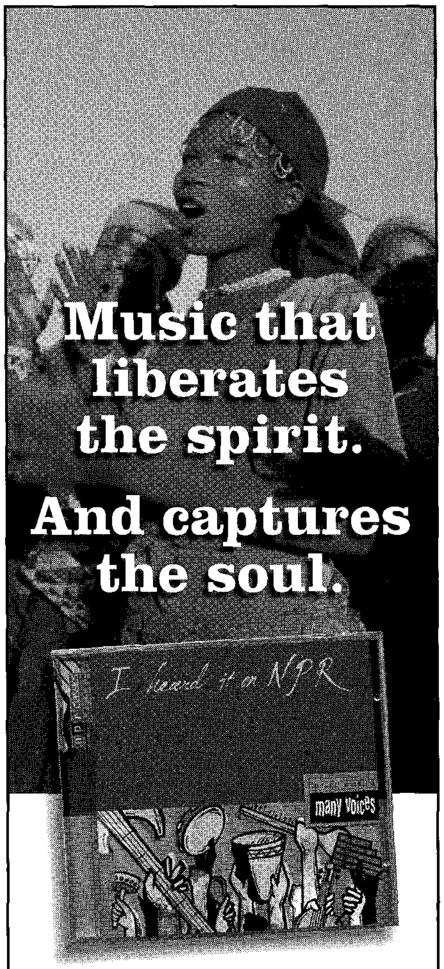

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CONTRIBUTORS

Michael Specter ("What Money Can Buy," p. 56) writes about public-health issues and science for the magazine. His article about avian influenza appeared in the issue of February 28, 2005.

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Dana Goodyear ("Quiet Depravity," p. 50) published her first collection of poems, "Honey and Junk," in April.

Adonis (Poems, pp. 54, 71, 77), a Syrian-born poet and essayist, has written more than twenty books in his native Arabic. Two of his poetry collections, "If Only the Sea Could Sleep" and "The Pages of Day and Night," have been translated into English.

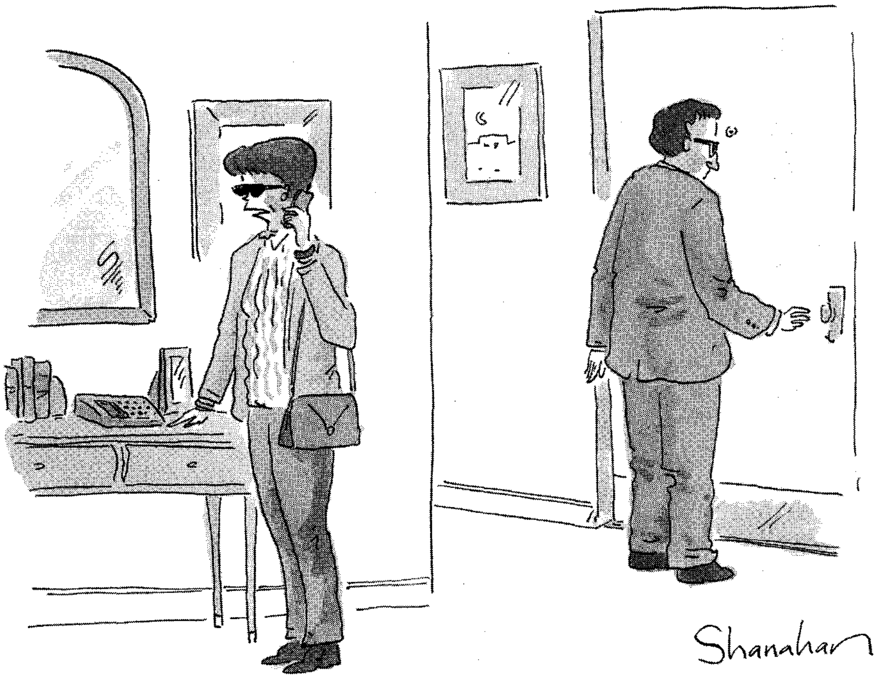
Truman Capote (Fiction, p. 72), who died in 1984, was a staff writer for *The New Yorker*. He is the author of thirteen books, including "Breakfast at Tiffany's" and "In Cold Blood." His newly discovered first novel, "Summer Crossing," written in 1943, when he was nineteen, comes out later this month.

Jill Lepore (Books, p. 80) is a professor of history at Harvard and the author of, most recently, "New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan."

H. Allen Orr (Books, p. 85) co-wrote, with Jerry A. Coyne, "Speciation," a book about the origin of species, which was published last year.

Nancy Franklin (On Television, p. 90) writes a regular column on television.

David Denby (The Current Cinema, p. 97) is a film critic for the magazine. His books include "American Sucker" and "Great Books." ♦



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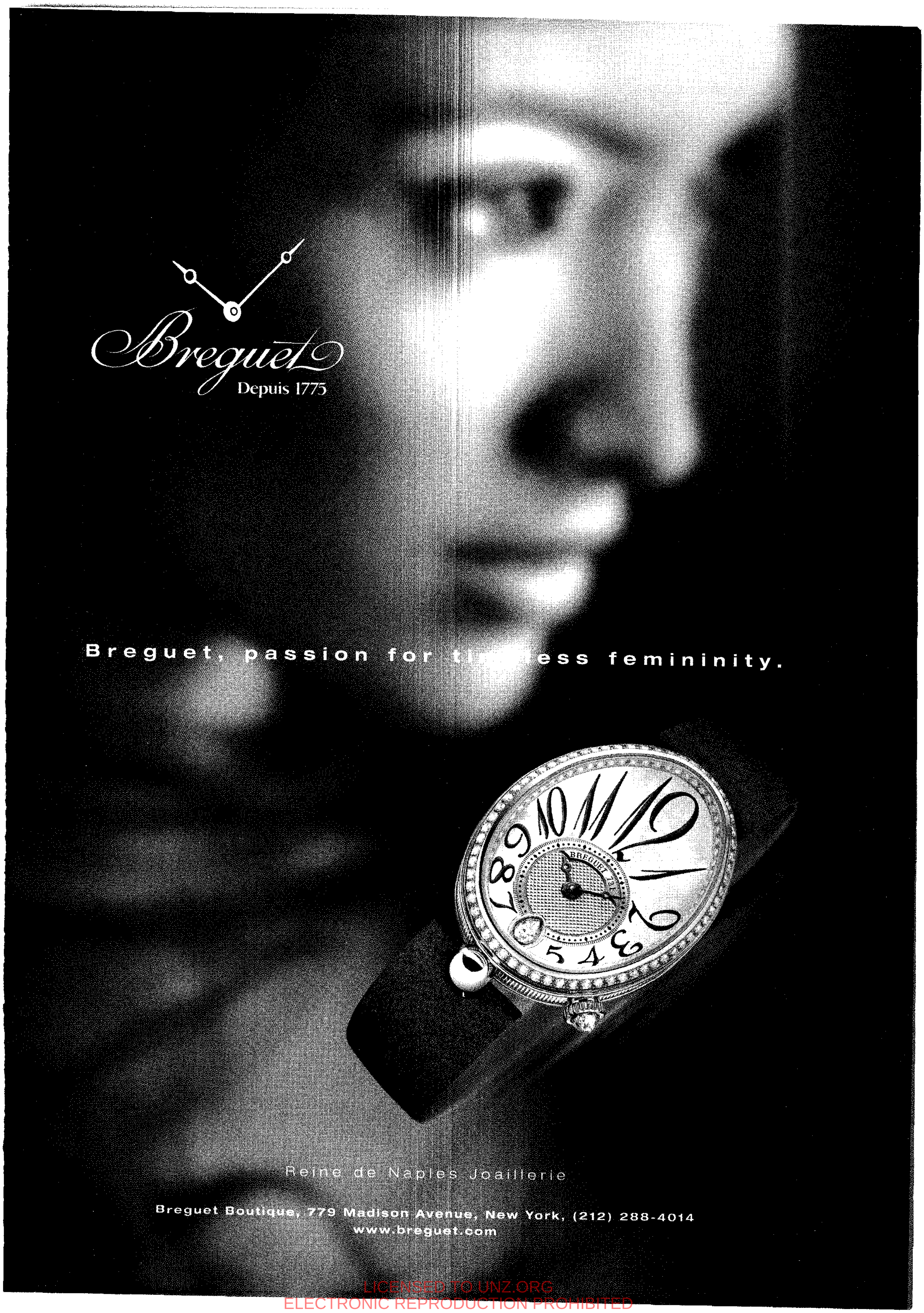

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—*THE NEW YORKER*

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THE MAIL

PUMPED UP

James Surowiecki offers compelling reasons for an increase in the gas tax (The Financial Page, September 26th). Nevertheless, his claim that "of all taxes, a gas tax is among the most fair and efficient" is misleading. He cites a survey of "forty top economists" who offered "unanimous support" for the gas taxes in the late nineteen-nineties, but one has to wonder how much weight they gave to the likely impact of the gas tax on those with lower incomes. A gas tax—like any sales tax—is deeply regressive. Recall that during those same years President Clinton proposed the fairer and more efficient "Btu taxes," only to be defeated by the lobbying of entrenched producer interests and those representing upper incomes. Taxes on gas are a heavier burden for people with lower incomes than for people with higher ones. Although there are, as Surowiecki says, important lessons to be drawn from "the devastation that Hurricane Katrina visited on the people of the Gulf Coast," surely making it even more costly for poor people to have access to automobile transportation is not one of them.

Eric Schliesser
Syracuse University
Syracuse, N.Y.

Paradoxically, Surowiecki's argument for higher gas taxes comes close to justifying the reverse when he describes how lower gasoline prices cause longer lines and more supply shortages. These phenomena, after all, could eventually lead to lower consumption without the need for the higher taxes, although getting there might be painful for the country. Surowiecki's argument for higher gasoline taxes to cover such "externalities" as the environmental cost of fossil fuels appears to offer an excellent example of social engineering through policy, but it assumes that all such externalities are identifiable and quantifiable. Yet this type of market interference, if practiced widely, would probably create for us the imbalances and abuses associated with command economies. Imagine if all products carried taxes based upon their externalities—no more cheap personal computers, low airfares, reasonably priced automobiles. The market already possesses mechanisms for dealing with the externalities, such as risk-trading through insurance and consumer demand for clean air. Penalty taxes on products based upon perceived external costs could seriously corrupt our market economy.

Gregorio Corrado
Dover, Mass.

ARLEN'S BUFFALO

John Lahr, in his fine essay on Harold Arlen, writes that Arlen "was able to put the provincial oppressiveness of his birthplace behind him" and quotes his quip that "suicide in Buffalo would be redundant" (A Critic at Large, September 19th). Arlen's Buffalo, far from being provincial, was a cosmopolitan city of music halls, theatres, and opera houses. Perhaps most important to his artistic development was the interaction, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, between the Jewish and African-American communities of Buffalo's east side; Arlen was clearly influenced by both the vocal improvisations of his cantor father and the ragtime that surrounded him. His childhood coincided with a time of economic prosperity and artistic achievement in Buffalo. Expanded around Frederick Law Olmsted's extensive system of parks and verdant carriageways, the city was home to landmark architecture by Burnham, Richardson, Sullivan, Wright, and McKim, Mead & White. When the Albright Art Gallery opened, four months after Arlen's birth, Buffalo was the nation's eighth-largest city and an important stop for travelling theatre companies and vaudeville acts.

Philip Nyhuis
Buffalo, N.Y.

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. They can also be faxed to 212-286-5047. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. All letters become the property of The New Yorker and will not be returned; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

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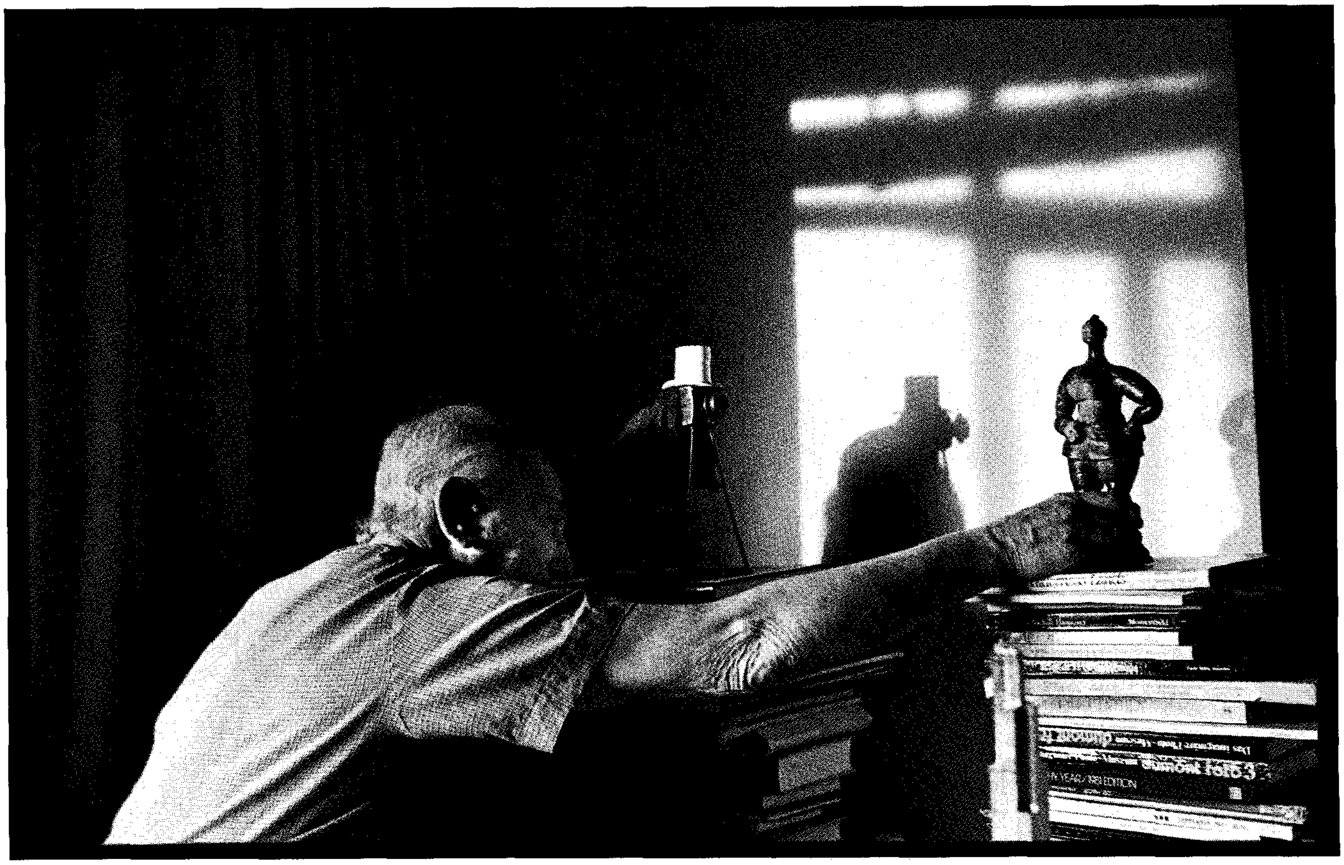

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
DÉNOUEMENT

Isabelle Huppert stars in a French-language production of "4.48 Psychose," an autobiographical account of the British playwright Sarah Kane's breakdown, which Kane completed just before her suicide, in 1999. (See page 12.)

NIGHT LIFE
RISING TO THE TOP

Cream, rock's prototypical power trio, lasted just three years before breaking up, in 1968. Since then, the group's members—the guitarist Eric Clapton, the bassist Jack Bruce, and the drummer Ginger Baker—reunited only once, at a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony in 1993, before playing a series of shows this spring at Royal Albert Hall. The reunion continues at Madison Square Garden this week. (See page 15.)

ART
AT THE MET

"Vincent van Gogh: The Drawings" suggests another angle from which to study the artist most often associated with colorful renderings of sunflowers and the night sky. On paper, the firmness and twitchy persistence of his vision comes to the forefront, in images ranging from an 1882 drawing of an exhausted worker to the meandering proliferation of "Wild Vegetation," drawn in 1889, a year before his death. (See page 16.)

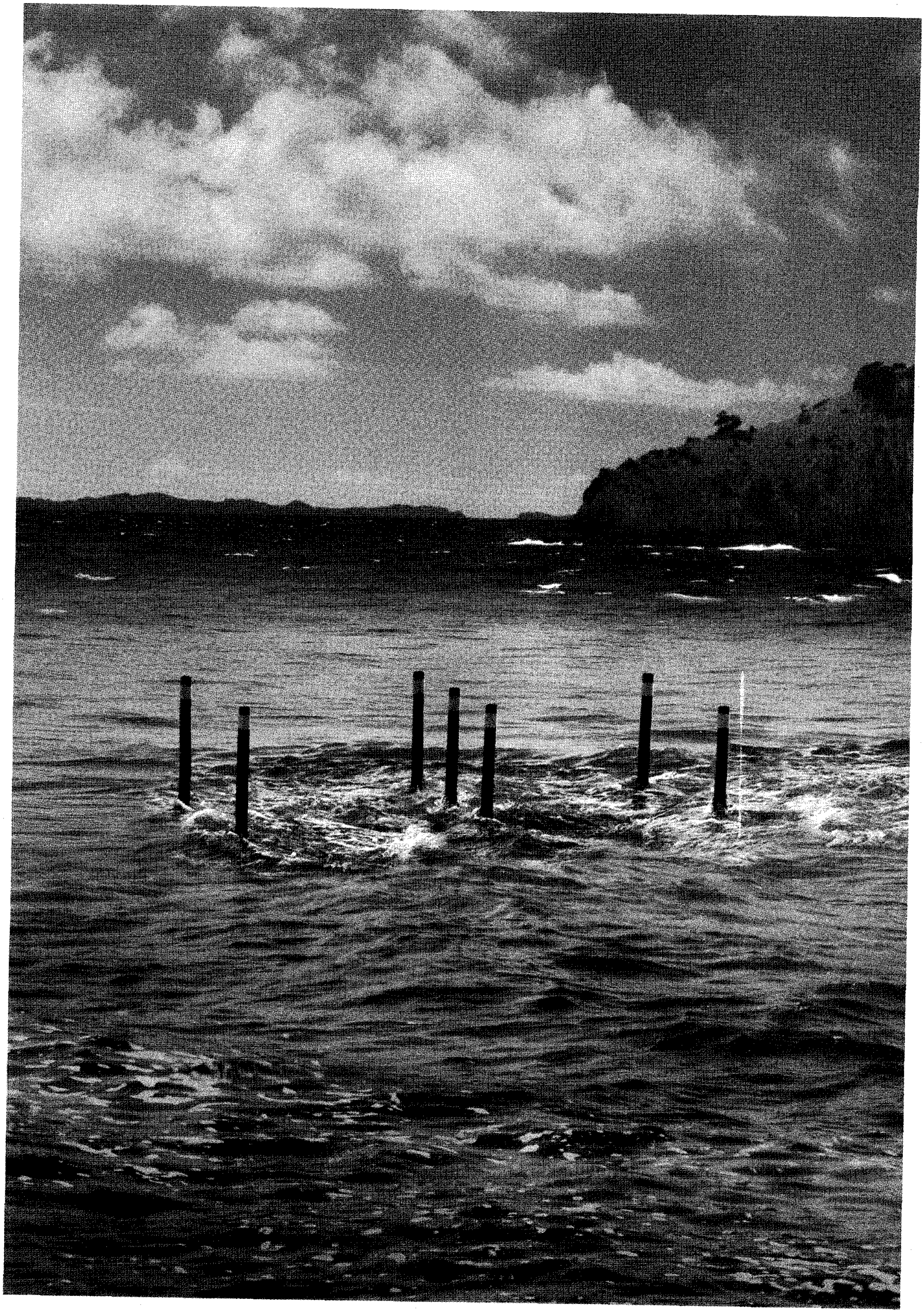
CLASSICAL MUSIC
WEDDING BELLS

The Trinity Church Choir offers a rare opportunity to hear, in Russian, Stravinsky's astonishing "Les Noces," a rough, vibrant, and mystical re-creation of a traditional Russian wedding accompanied by an orchestra of four pianos and percussion, along with works by Britten and Mozart. (See page 22.)

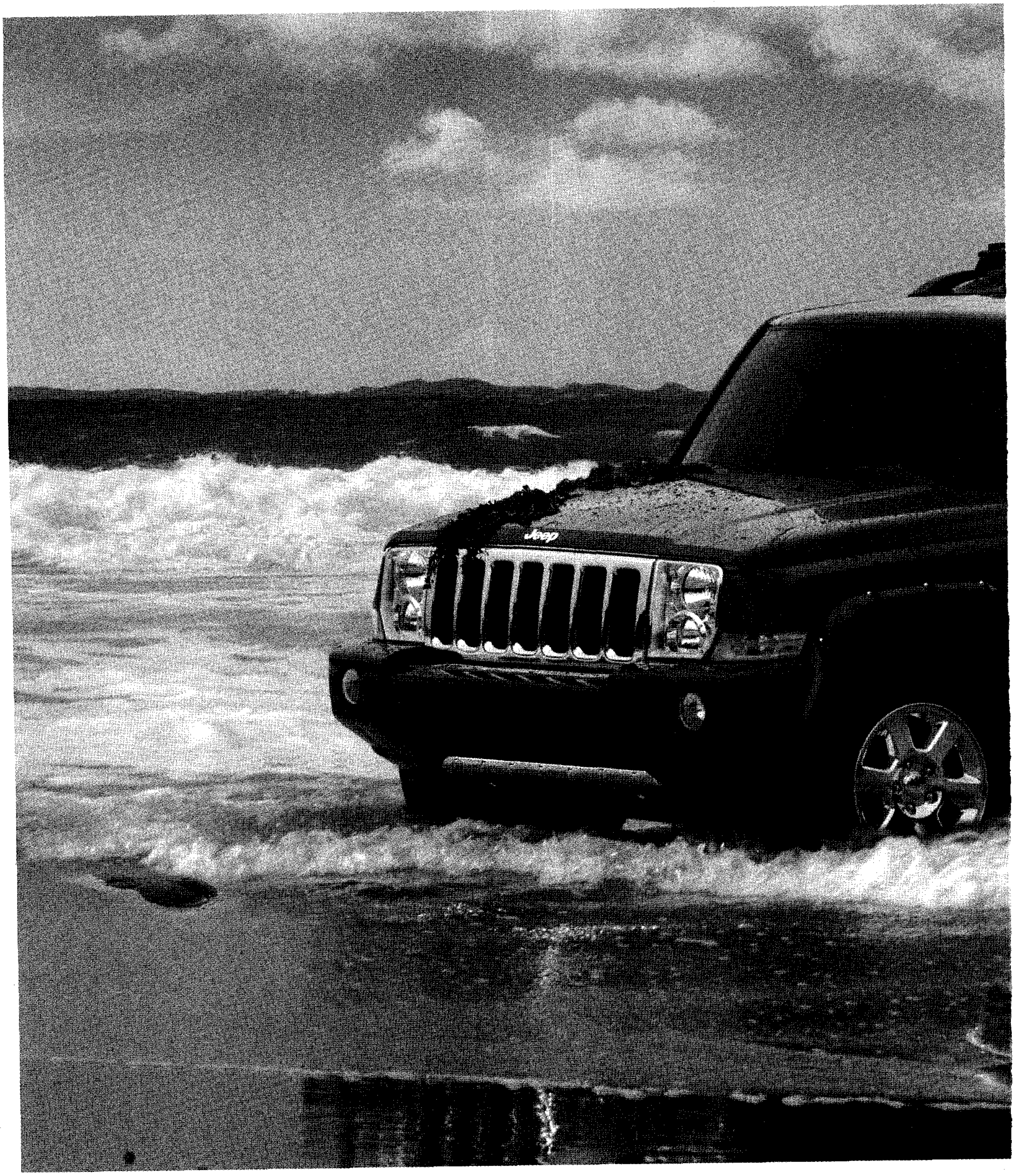
MOVIES
NARUSE'S CENTURY

Film Forum launches a retrospective devoted to the Japanese director Mikio Naruse, on the centenary of his birth. Several films featuring Naruse's muse Hideko Takamine will screen, including "When a Woman Ascends the Stairs" and "Floating Clouds." (See page 26.)

The photographer André Kertész (1894-1985). Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.



Fictionalization. Vehicle



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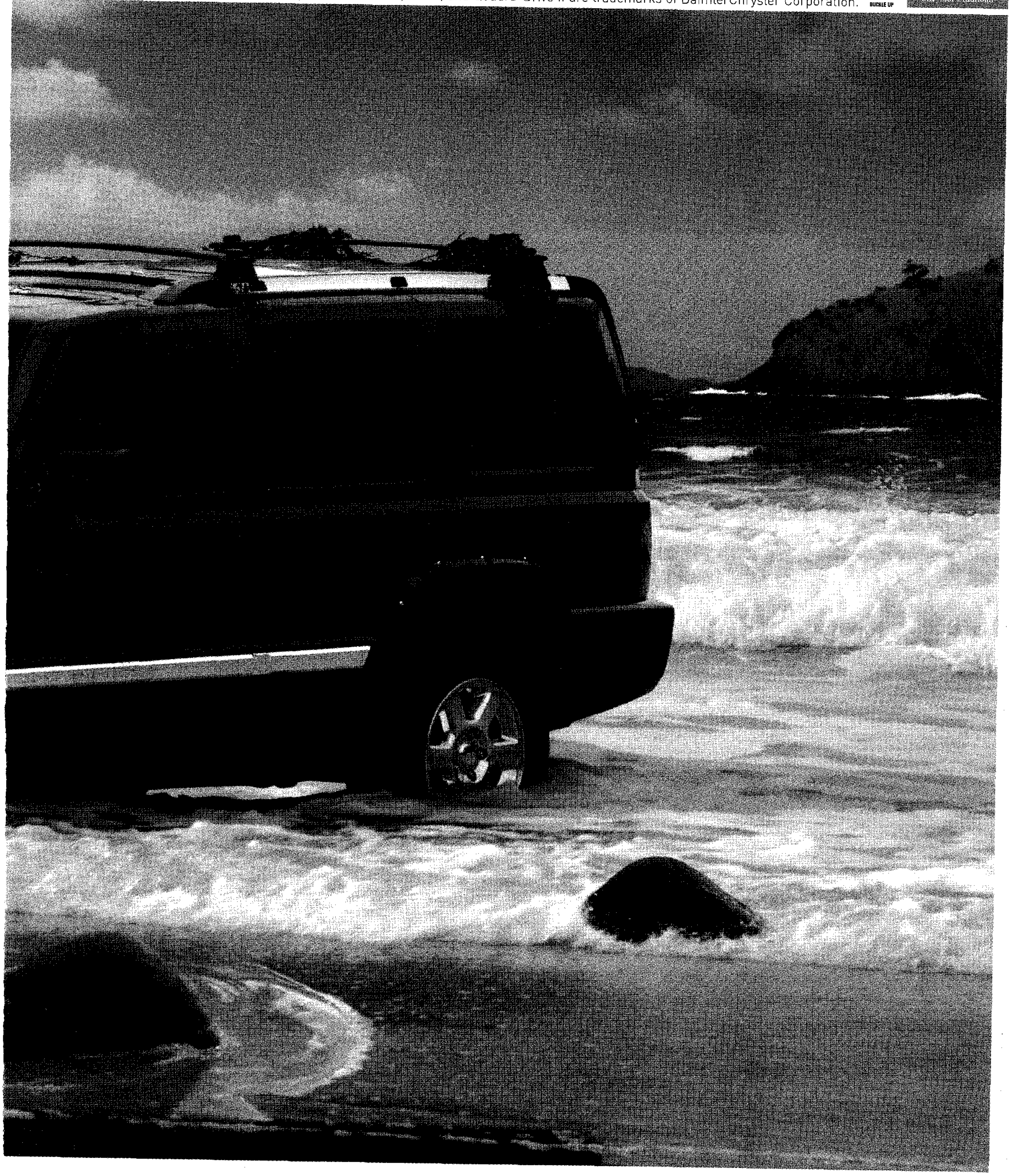

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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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ASHLEY MONTANA GOES ASHORE IN THE CAICOS . . . OR WHAT AM I DOING HERE?
Roger Rosenblatt wrote and Jim Simpson directs this series of comical vignettes starring Bebe Neuwirth, Jenn Harris, Jeffrey DeMunn, and James Waterston. In previews. Opens Oct. 20. (The Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

4.48 PSYCHOSE
Isabelle Huppert stars in this French-language version of the English playwright Sarah Kane's final play, about her own psychological breakdown. With English titles. Oct. 19-30. (BAM Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

JERSEY BOYS
At the newly renamed August Wilson Theatre (formerly the Virginia), a new musical about how Frankie Valli and the other members of the Four Seasons came up from blue-collar roots to form the successful pop group. Directed by Des McAnuff, with music by Bob Gaudio, a book by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice, and lyrics by Bob Crewe. In previews. (245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200.)

A MOTHER, A DAUGHTER AND A GUN
Olympia Dukakis, Veanne Cox, and George S. Irving star in a new comedy by Barra Grant, about the emotional relationship between mothers and daughters. Jonathan Lynn ("My Cousin Vinny") directs. In previews. (Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

NORMAL
The Transport Group presents a musical about an American family dealing with a daughter suffering from an eating disorder. The cast includes Barbara Walsh ("Hairspray"), Adam Heller, and Erin Leigh Peck. With book by Yvonne Adrian, lyrics by Cheryl Stern, and music by Tom Kochan. Jack Cummings III directed. Previews begin Oct. 20. (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 212-352-3101.)

THE *ODD* COUPLE
Neil Simon's classic play stars Nathan Lane as the slovenly sportswriter Oscar Madison and Matthew Broderick as the fastidious photographer Felix Ungar. Joe Mantello directs. In previews. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

SEE WHAT I WANNA SEE
A new musical at the Public by Michael John LaChiusa ("The Wild Party"), loosely based on the short stories of Ryunosuke Akutagawa, tells contemporary New York tales of loss and hope. The ensemble cast includes Idina Menzel, Mary Testa, Marc Kudisch, Aaron Lohr, and Henry Stram. Directed by Ted Sperling. In previews. (425 Lafayette St. 212-539-8500.)

SWEENEY TODD
The innovatively staged revival of Stephen Sondheim's musical thriller from 1979 comes to Broadway by way of London. John Doyle's production stars Michael Cerveris ("Assassins") as the vengeful barber and Patti LuPone as his co-conspirator. In previews. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

THIRD
Wendy Wasserstein's new play, about a college professor who accuses a student of plagiarism, stars Dianne Wiest, Charles Durning, and Jason Ritter. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. In previews. Opens Oct. 24. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

ABSURD PERSON SINGULAR
Alan Ayckbourn's triptych brings together three couples of different social classes on consecutive Christmas Eves. The Manhattan Theatre Club revival stars Mireille Enos, Clea Lewis, Sam Robards, Alan Ruck, Deborah Rush, and Paxton Whitehead. John Tillinger directs. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE ASPHALT KISS
The Lord Strange Company presents the U.S. première of a tragicomic play by the Brazilian playwright Nelson Rodrigues, about a man whose life is upended by a tabloid journalist. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

BEOWULF
The Irish Repertory Theatre gives the eighth-century epic poem a rock-opera twist. With music and lyrics by the "Saturday Night Live" musical director Lenny Pickett and additional lyrics by Lindsey Turner. Directed by Charlotte Moore. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

CRESTFALL
Three actresses take the stage one by one, delivering the Irish playwright Mark O'Rowe's bitter monologues about interconnected adulteries and their brutal recompense in an imaginary slum town called Crestfall. Though their tales of weak husbands and feral pimps are by turns torrid, slangy, grotesque, and hallucinatory, they eventually blur together. In spite of taut performances (particularly by Mari Howells, as Tilly, a saucer-eyed heroin addict and streetwalker), the poetic language weighs down the characterizations. Directed by George C. Heslin and produced by the Origin Theatre Company in association with Dublin's Güna Nua Theatre. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through Oct. 23.)

The Gangbé Brass Band plays Zankel Hall on October 22 (see Night Life).

ZOHAR LAZAR

CYCLING PAST THE MATTERHORN
A trio of fine actresses animates Deborah Grimberg's pointed comedy about the ways in which the illnesses of mothers are visited upon their daughters. When Amy (Carrie Preston), a London palm reader, dodges responsibility for her needy, hypercritical mother (Shirley Knight), her tough aunt (Brenda Wehle) steps into the fray. The play is constructed as one very long guilt trip, but it's more fun than that, with antic staging and plenty of zingers, and more ambivalent, too—as its clumsy, uncertain conclusion proves. Eleanor Holdridge directs. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

EINSTEIN'S GIFT
The U.S. première of a new work by Vern Thiessen, about the relationship between Albert Einstein and Fritz Haber, both of whom made discoveries that were instrumental in devising methods of mass destruction. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

FIVE COURSE LOVE
In Gregg Coffin's new musical comedy, Heather Ayers, John Bolton, and Jeff Gurner play fifteen characters who go on five dates. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 212-307-4100.)

THE GREAT AMERICAN TRAILER PARK MUSICAL
Joyful and unashamedly vulgar, Betsy Kelso's comic fable about women in a Florida trailer park and their no-account men is more fun than a chair-throwing episode of "Jerry Springer" set to music. When a stripper named Pippi (the incandescent Orfeh) moves into Armadillo Acres, on the run from a permanent-marker-sniffing loon named Duke, she gets sympathy from the park's ruling clique, Betty (Linda Hart, a bleached-blond Eartha Kitt with mighty lungs), Linoleum (Marya Grandy), and Pickles (the very funny Leslie Kritzer)—until she steals somebody's husband. The rousing songs, by David Nehls, include the ballad "I Gotta Make Like a Nail (and Press On)," which has the wattage of the disco hit "I Will Survive." The ingenious set is by Derek McLane ("I Am My Own Wife"). (Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

IN MY LIFE
A romance between a musician with Tourette's syndrome and an obsessive-compulsive journalist is the subject of this new musical written and directed by Joseph Brooks, the composer of the pop ballad "You Light Up My Life." (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

IN THE CONTINUUM
The fiery young performers Danai Gurira and Nikkole Salter investigate the struggles of two women on separate continents who contract H.I.V. In a series of interlaced monologues, they portray a Zimbabwean newscaster and a financially strapped teenager from L.A., as well as an assortment of friends, relatives, advice givers, and witch doctors. Gurira and Salter prove to be perceptive playwrights and vibrant actors, taking an intelligent (and often comedic) look at the issues of economic dependency, social stigma, and family pressure that black women with the disease are faced with. Directed by Robert O'Hara and presented by Primary Stages. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

LATE FRAGMENT
In Francine Volpe's new play, Matthew (Nick Sandow) survives the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks and returns home, shell-shocked and covered in white dust, to a strangely apathetic circle of people. A few concerned citizens send him fruit baskets, but his own wife (the outstanding Jenna Stern) shows more interest in the young family lawyer, whom she summons to assess how much money they are eligible for, than in her husband's debilitating malaise. There is crisp comedy in every scene, but it's played against the lingering pall of tragedy. The play suc-

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS

Americans tend to regard the flowering of ballet in this country as due to one thing alone, George Balanchine. "Ballets Russes," which opens at the Film Forum on October 26, offers an alternative creation myth. This documentary, by Dan Geller and Dana Goldfine, tracks two once famous companies—de Basil's Ballets Russes and the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo—that toured from the thirties onward, showing ballets by Michel Fokine, Léonide Massine, Bronislava Nijinska, and Balanchine, too. Like many outsiders, the filmmakers view ballet both as an exalted mystery and as a big froufrou. We get interviews with aged ballerinas stroking their jewelry and telling us how fabulous they were. But these troupes *were* sort of fabulous, and they introduced a lot of podunk towns to classical dance. The movie implies that the Ballets Russes companies were fun and glamorous and that what came after wasn't as good. That's not true, or at least the second part isn't, but who cares? This film is a needed tribute.

—Joan Acocella

BALLET RUSSE DE MONTE CARLO: SASHA/GETTY IMAGES

cessfully taps into the disorienting nature of trauma but withholds any kind of catharsis. Co-directed by Michael Imperioli (who plays Christopher on "The Sopranos") and Zetna Fuentes. (Studio Dante, 257 W. 29th St. 212-279-4200. Through Oct. 22.)

LATINOLOGUES
A collection of comic and thoughtful monologues about the Latino experience in America. Directed by Cheech Marin and written by Rick Najera. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

MASSACRE (SING TO YOUR CHILDREN)
LAByrinth Theatre Company presents a production of a work in progress at the Public, written by José Rivera and directed by Kate Whoriskey, about residents of a New Hampshire town who revolt against a citizen who terrifies them. (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200. Through Oct. 23.)

THE MASTER BUILDER
In this ably directed revival at the Pearl, Shepard Sobel focusses on explicating Ibsen's antihero, the architect Halvard Solness (Dan Daily), and his epic vision of himself as a god in human form whose work not only defines nature but surpasses it. To realize his grandiose plan, Solness swallows whole the weaker people who must feed it—among them his wily, long-suffering wife (Robin Leslie Brown, in an astonishing performance) and Ragnar (the equally arresting Sean McNall), the underling whose artistry is appropriated by Solness. Sad to say, though, McNall and Brown are the only relevant features in an otherwise embalmed, overly historicized production. (Reviewed in our issue of 10/17/05.) (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802. Through Oct. 30.)

MURDER
Personal Space Theatrics presents the New York première of a play by the Israeli playwright Hanoch Levin, set amid an ongoing war, adapted and directed by Michael Weiselberg. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101.)

A NAKED GIRL ON THE APPIAN WAY
In a new Roundabout production, the playwright Richard Greenberg's distinctly American age phobia dovetails with his fear of women: he believes, it seems, that once a woman is no longer "pretty," she becomes a wreck of negative feelings. It is those feelings that Bess (Jill Clayburgh), a cookbook author and mother of three racially diverse, adopted, now adult children, tries to keep at bay. Greenberg wants "Appian Way" to show us that nothing in upper-middle-class life appears to be what it is. But, although the actors—particularly Clayburgh—give the production their all, the cacophony of one-liners and the rush of secrets exposed in the last minutes make this fast-paced show a rather shallow experience. (10/17/05) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

THE PAVILION
Two former sweethearts confront their regrets at a high-school reunion, in a drama by Craig Wright ("Orange Flower Water"), presented by the Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre. As the pair, played by Brian D'Arcy James and Tasha Lawrence, sort through their ugly past, a narrator (Stephen Bogardus) delivers sprawling soliloquies that cast a metaphysical light on the action. The play, with its quirky blend of the intimate and the ontological, doesn't quite work, but Wright has a flair for pithy dialogue and offhand lyricism. Directed by Lucie Tiberghien. (224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444. Through Oct. 23.)

SLUT
This musical about sex and drinking in the East Village was a hit at the New York International Fringe Festival. With a book and lyrics by Ben A. H. Winters and music by Stephen Sislen. Directed by Gordon Greenberg. (A.T.A. Theatre, 314 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200.)

A SOLDIER'S PLAY
Charles Fuller's Pulitzer Prize-winning drama from 1981, about a murder in a black battalion in Louisiana during the Second World War, receives its first major New York revival. Taye Diggs, Anthony Mackie, James McDaniel, and Steven Pasquale lead the cast. Jo Bonney directs. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

WALKING DOWN BROADWAY
Seven decades before "Sex and the City," Gotham newcomers Marge (the winsome Christine Albright) and Elsie (giddily portrayed by Amanda Jones) went sashaying down Riverside Drive, their eyes peeled for eligible beaux. In this hitherto unproduced play, written by Dawn Powell in 1931, the girls don't manage to land über-capitalists; instead they hook up with two young salesmen who are just as eager as they are to taste the city's pleasures, and to escape the loneliness of its hollow promises. Powell's play has some predictable plot twists, but it's also rather charming, and the Mint has done well to unearth it now. Steven Williford directs. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

Also Playing

ALTAR BOYZ: Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747. **CHICAGO:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG:** Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100. **DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DOUBT:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **DRUMSTRUCK:** Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100. **FOOLS IN LOVE:** Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200. **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT:** 47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-239-6200. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **MOVIN' OUT:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100. **ONE-MAN STAR WARS TRILOGY:** Lamb's Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **ORSON'S SHADOW:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **SWEET CHARITY:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING):** DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Oct. 22: The Woodstock vet **Richie Havens.** Later on the 22nd, the **Rebirth Brass Band** brings in its New Orleans funk. Oct. 25: The **Fixx,** British veterans of the early days of MTV, deliver an edgy synthetic sound that's punctuated by Jamie West-Oram's restrained guitars and the vocalist Cy Curnin's cries of existential angst. Their biggest hit, "One Thing Leads to Another," dates from 1983.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Oct. 20: **Mates of State,** a husband-and-wife group from San Francisco, serve up shimmering indie pop. Kori Gardner (organ and vocals) and Jason Hammel (drums and vocals) have a charming "Play anywhere, anytime" approach, and their whimsical confections are suitable for any number of activities, including long road trips, dance marathons, and doing what couples do when alone late at night. Oct. 23: The Hollywood starlet Juliette Lewis leads her band, **Juliette & the Licks,** through rollicking garage-rock numbers, often getting as sweaty as Iggy Pop did in his heyday.

BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC
30 Lafayette Ave. (718-636-4100)—Oct. 22: The stunning Brazilian vocalist **Daniela Mercury** started out singing from the backs of roving sound trucks during carnival season and has gone on to become a major star at home. Her rousing mate-

rial is based on *axé* music (a drum-driven genre from Bahia), but it also incorporates elements of samba, rock, and jazz.

CANAL ROOM

285 West Broadway (212-941-8100)—Oct. 21: **Acid Mothers Temple,** an eccentric psychedelic collective from Japan, boldly experiments with sprawling, spacey fare. Its expansive compositions often risk turning into bad trips, but that hasn't stopped them from developing a cult audience here.

CARNEGIE HALL

57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—Oct. 26: **Youssou N'Dour** (see Zankel Hall, below) caps a festival of music from Africa with the first U.S. performance of "Egypt," his album from last year, which celebrates his Sufi faith. He will be backed by Fathy Salama's Cairo Orchestra.

HAMMERSTEIN BALLROOM

Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. (212-307-7171)—Last year the Washington-based indie-rock band Modest Mouse cracked the mainstream with its album "Good News for People Who Love Bad News." **Death Cab for Cutie** (here Oct. 19-20) continues the Evergreen State's assault on popular culture; "Plans," its latest album of ethereal melodies and introspective lyrics, just grazed the top of the charts.

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Oct. 19: The country noir of **Mary Gauthier.** Oct. 20: The Argentinean singer **Juana Molina** lays a whispery voice over softly strummed acoustic guitars and tender electronic effects. Oct. 21: **Chocolate Genius** is the nom de microphone of Marc Anthony Thompson, a vocalist and visionary who released two records under his own name in the eighties before delving into the downtown music scene and developing an expansive take on neo-soul. His latest release, "Black Yankee Rock," is an ambitious collection of down-tempo numbers (with an occasional guitar-driven song) that includes contributions from Meshell Ndegéocello, Marc Ribot, Toshi Reagon, and others. Oct. 24: The Los Angeles singer-songwriter **Stew.**

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. (212-307-7171)—Oct. 24-26: The return of **Cream**—Eric Clapton, Jack Bruce, and Ginger Baker—has long been anticipated ever since the power trio broke up, nearly four decades ago. Nehru jackets, tangled locks, and tinted spectacles may belong to the past, but high-powered blues rock never goes out of style.

MERCURY LOUNGE

217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Oct. 22-23: **James McMurtry,** a protégé of John Mellencamp in the late eighties, is an alt-folk troubadour with a literary pedigree (he's the son of the novelist Larry McMurtry). His latest album, "Childish Things," is sharp and timely. Oct. 24: **Adult.** A product of the fertile Detroit electronic-music underground, this enigmatic outfit, which started out as a duo but recently added a guitarist, turns out a jolting mix of retro-primitive electronics and paranoid lyrics that ends up being both captivating and unsettling. Oct. 25: **Patterson Hood,** the front man for the Southern rockers Drive-By Truckers.

PIANOS

158 Ludlow St. (212-505-3733)—The strange and subtle comedian **Eugene Mirman** is as likely to perform in rock venues as he is at comedy clubs: he recently toured with Yo La Tengo, Modest Mouse, and the Shins. Last year his CD "The Absurd Nightclub Comedy of Eugene Mirman" was a favorite of *The Onion.* On Oct. 23-24 he takes the stage to record his second album.

SOUTHPAW

125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—Oct. 19: **Acid Mothers Temple** (see Canal Room). Oct. 21: **Los Straitjackets** wear colorful Mexican wrestling masks and play big-wave surf-rock instrumentals, except on this tour, in which they're being fronted by **Big Sandy,** of the Los Angeles rockabilly and Western-swing ensemble Big Sandy and His Fly-Rite Boys. Oct. 22: The endearing Philadelphia bar band **Marah.**

WEBSTER HALL

125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Oct. 20: The exceptional post-folk artist **Devendra Banhart** makes

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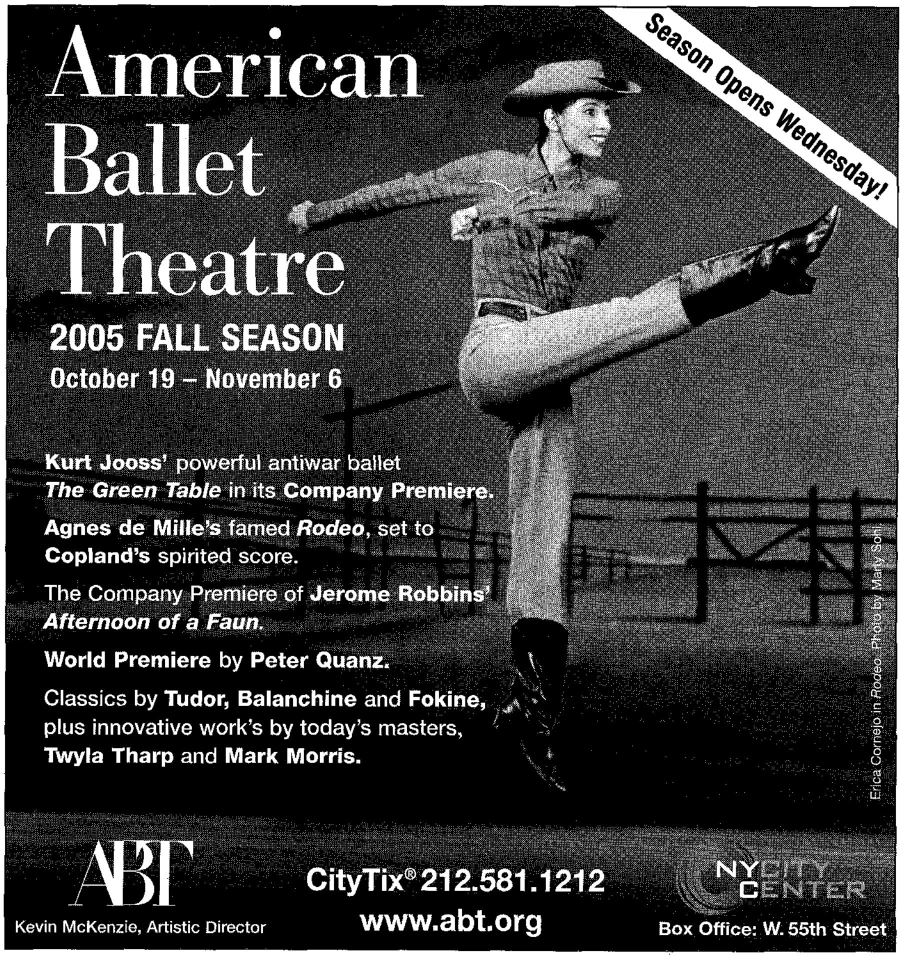
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Erica Cornejo in Rodeo. Photo by Marty Sohl.

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some of the most original music of the moment. His latest album, "Cripple Crow," has traditional singer-songwriter elements, bits of country, psychedelia, and clever lyrics; it's all been done before, but never quite in this way. Oct. 22: **Mike Doughty,** the former leader of the critically adored local group Soul Coughing, has a new album, "Haughty Melodic," on Dave Matthews's ATO record label. The big man himself helps out on one of the tracks. Oct. 23: It's unlikely that **Jello Biafra** will ever share a stage with his seminal hardcore band, the Dead Kennedys, again (such is the discord in the group that the band members sued him over royalty payments; Biafra lost). The tireless free-speech advocate and punk legend recently teamed up with the **Melvins,** a gang of notorious proto-grunge noisemakers, who easily match Biafra's scathing, pitch-black wit.

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Oct. 22: The **Gangbé Brass Band** is a ten-piece ensemble from Benin that mixes the instrumentation of a military band with the voodoo syncopation of New Orleans. Their name is Fon for "the sound of metal" and refers to the trumpets, saxophones, trombones, and sousaphone that set hearts racing and feet stomping. (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall. For more information, call 212-545-7536.)

ZANKEL HALL
Carnegie Hall, 57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—Oct. 23-26: **Youssou N'Dour's** festival of African music features the U.S. début of the septuagenarian griot singer **Yandé Codou Sène** on the first night, followed by new music from the continent on the 24th and a tutorial in *mbalax,* the fast-moving dance music that dominates the Senegalese charts, led by N'Dour and his **Super Etoile** band, on the 25th. N'Dour moves upstairs for the final night of the festival (see Carnegie Hall).

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Oct. 18-23: The **Dizzy Gillespie Alumni All-Stars.** The great trumpeter has been gone for more than a decade, but the presence of his trusted associates, including **Slide Hampton, James Moody,** and **Roy Hargrove,** insures a virtuosic and lively take on Gillespie's inspired blend of bop, big band, and Latin music.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through Oct. 29, the Broadway veteran **Elaine Stritch.**

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Art Pepper referred to **George Cables** as "Mr. Beautiful," and when his pianist coaxes nectar out of a ballad or negotiates a bebop run with grace you understand why the late saxophone legend was so smitten. Cables, a West Coast fixture, visits Oct. 18-23 with a quartet.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—With Elaine Stritch holding court uptown, and the irrepressible **Carol Channing** taking the stage here through Oct. 22, the city is being invaded by feisty octogenarian divas. Channing's new show is called "The First 80 Years Are the Hardest."

JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—Oct. 20-21: Until jazz ensembles start regularly incorporating oud, tuba, and acoustic guitar into their lineups, Henry Threadgill's adventurous ensemble **Zooid** will remain outside the mainstream, but that's where Threadgill seems most comfortable anyway.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Oct. 19-23: The seventies jazz trumpeter **Charles Tolliver** appears at the helm of a big band whose revolving ranks are stocked with both vital veterans and young players. Oct. 25-26: **Miguel Zenon,** a passionate alto saxophonist who's played with David Sanchez and Charlie Haden, leads his own quartet.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—Oct. 20: The baritone saxophonist **Claire Daly's** Rah! Rah! band pays tribute to one of jazz's craftiest eccentrics, Rahsaan Roland Kirk.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Oct. 18-23: The quick-fingered pianist **Geoffrey Keezer,** a veteran of Art Blakey and Ray Brown's bands, is most impressive when he displays the lyrical sensibility that comes through in his occasional work with the guitarist Jim Hall. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ZANKEL HALL
Carnegie Hall, 57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—Oct. 19: The acclaimed pianist **Fred Hersch** celebrates his fiftieth birthday with a solo concert.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Vincent van Gogh: The Drawings."** Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Santiago Calatrava: Sculpture Into Architecture."** Through March 5. ♦ The city built by Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV as "the dream of delirious architects" to rival Paris and Rome lends treasures from its heyday in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. **"Prague: The Crown of Bohemia, 1347-1437"** is populated with many apple-cheeked Madonnas, who share gallery space with illuminated books, brocaded tapestries, amethyst vessels, rock-crystal reliquaries, and stone statuary from Karlstejn Castle and St. Vitus Cathedral. Look, too, for an ingenious book of artist's studies, an unfolding series of inch-square sketches depicting everything from innocent babes and hoary old men to rams, boars, and spiders. Through Jan. 3. ♦ **"The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult."** Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Sol LeWitt on the Roof: Splotches, Whirls, and Twirls."** An installation in the roof garden, featuring five spiky stalagmite sculptures and a wall drawing. Through Oct. 30. ♦ The centerpiece of **"The Art of Medicine in Ancient Egypt"** is a fifteen-foot papyrus (ca. 1650-1550 B.C.), on loan from the New York Academy of Medicine, explaining the diagnosis and treatment of wounds to the head, neck, and shoulders by means both scientific and magical. Ointment jars, statues of healing gods, implements, and mummies are also on view. Through Jan. 15. ♦ The Costume Institute presents **"Rara Avis: Selections from the Iris Barrel Apfel Collection."** Through Jan. 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—The retrospective exhibition **"Elizabeth Murray"** opens on Oct. 23. ♦ **"Stillness: Michael Snow/Sam Taylor Wood,"** a small show of intimately scaled photographs and video works. Through Nov. 28. ♦ **"The High Line"** details Field Operations and Diller Scofidio & Renfro's ambitious urban rails-to-trails scheme for the abandoned elevated tracks that run along the West Side from Gansevoort Street to Thirty-fourth Street. Through Oct. 31. ♦ **"SAFE: Design Takes on Risk."** Through Jan. 2. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—The sprawling exhibition **"Russia!"** includes most everything you might think could fit under that rubric: gilt religious icons dating from the Middle Ages, Renaissance-era Western European paintings from imperial collections, romanticized portraits of peasant life, socialist-realist propaganda, early modernist masterworks from the collections of industrialists, videos made just this year. Many of the items have not left Russia in centuries, or even ever; pieces like Malevich's "Black Square" (which usually lives at the Hermitage), Vasily Perov's portrait of Dostoyevsky (the only one painted in the writer's lifetime), and a fifteenth-century icon made by Andrei Rublev will be entirely new to most American eyes. Through Jan. 11. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—The retrospective **"Oscar Bluemner: A Passion for Color"** aims to reposition the artist (1867-1938) as a major figure in the development of twentieth-century art. The work here ranges from the architectural drawings of his first career to his later color-saturated symbolic landscapes. Through Feb. 12. ♦ Drawings and a new animation piece are on view in **"Raymond Pettibon."** Through Feb. 19. ♦ **"Robert Smithson,"** a retrospective of drawings, constructions, and collages,

TABLES FOR TWO
BRUNO JAMAIS

24 E. 81st St. (212-396-3444)—Three years ago Bruno Jamais, who'd been fired as the maître d' at Daniel, decided to start an elegant clubhouse for his old clients—"men who are presidents and chairmen of huge companies," he said at the time. "And their wives," he added. Bruno's goes late, serving food until 4 A.M., even as it morphs, via the removal of tablecloths, into a lounge. Tony Chi, Bruno's designer, has said, "The place is about rubbing, being together." A private dining room in the basement doubles as a surreptitious smoking area, where strangers congregate, rub, and exclaim, "You are very beautiful, let me tell you this."

At 8 P.M. on a recent steamy evening, the place was deserted, save for a soul band setting up. "Where is everybody?" the captain was asked. "Don't worry," he replied. Sure enough, by 9:15, the patrons outnumbered the staff. More than one party consisted of a lone gray-haired gent and three or four young, or younger, women. "It's like a professor and his students," a diner remarked. "Except that those aren't students." One of the non-students, in tight pants and a floral halter top, explained, as she volunteered her number, that she had seven businesses and five cell phones ("I only answer one"). The band played "Love Train," and a man who looked a bit like Dennis Farina, in a black T-shirt tucked into pleated linen pants, took a henna-haired companion for a whirl. The ambience felt vaguely Estonian, with a little Southampton thrown in.

Amid such a spectacle, it would be easy to overlook the food—just so much fuel for the love train—were it not for the fact that it costs so much. The Dover sole (a rather wan slab) and the short ribs (a sweet heap) were passable, but not at forty-two and twenty-eight dollars a pop. That their accompanying sides don't always arrive might be a good thing. There's a gloopy little dish of flavorless gnocchi, some limp green beans: fit for a four-year-old, perhaps, but not for men who are presidents. (Open Mondays through Saturdays for dinner. Entrées $16-$42.)

—*Nick Paumgarten*

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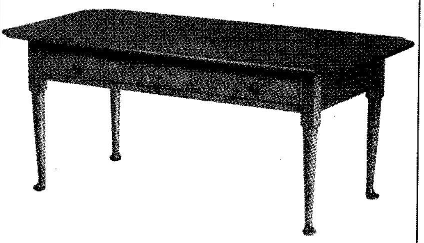

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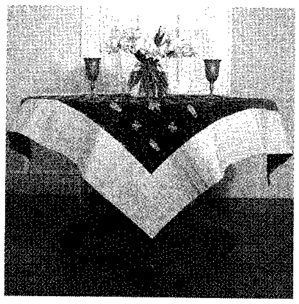

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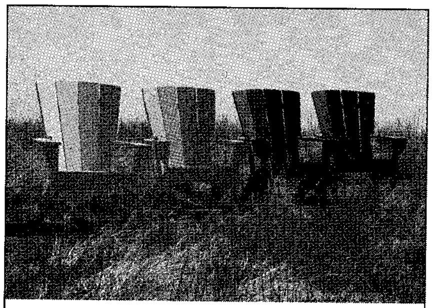

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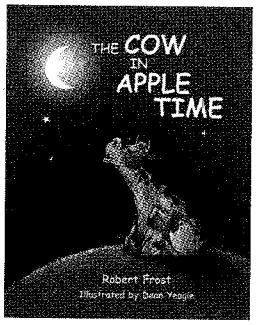

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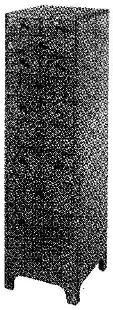

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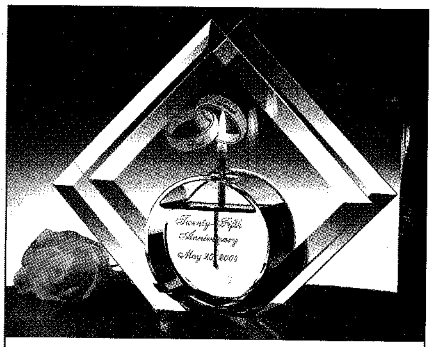

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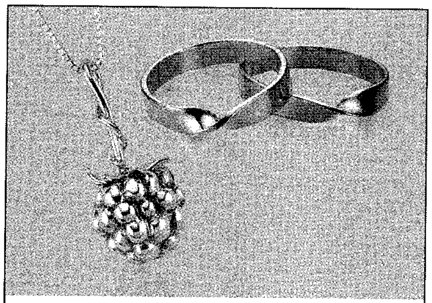

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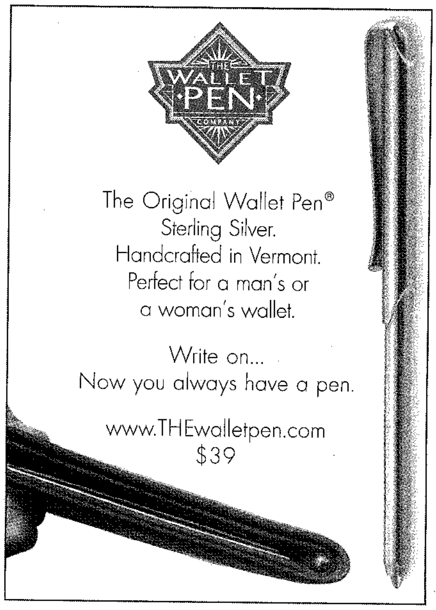

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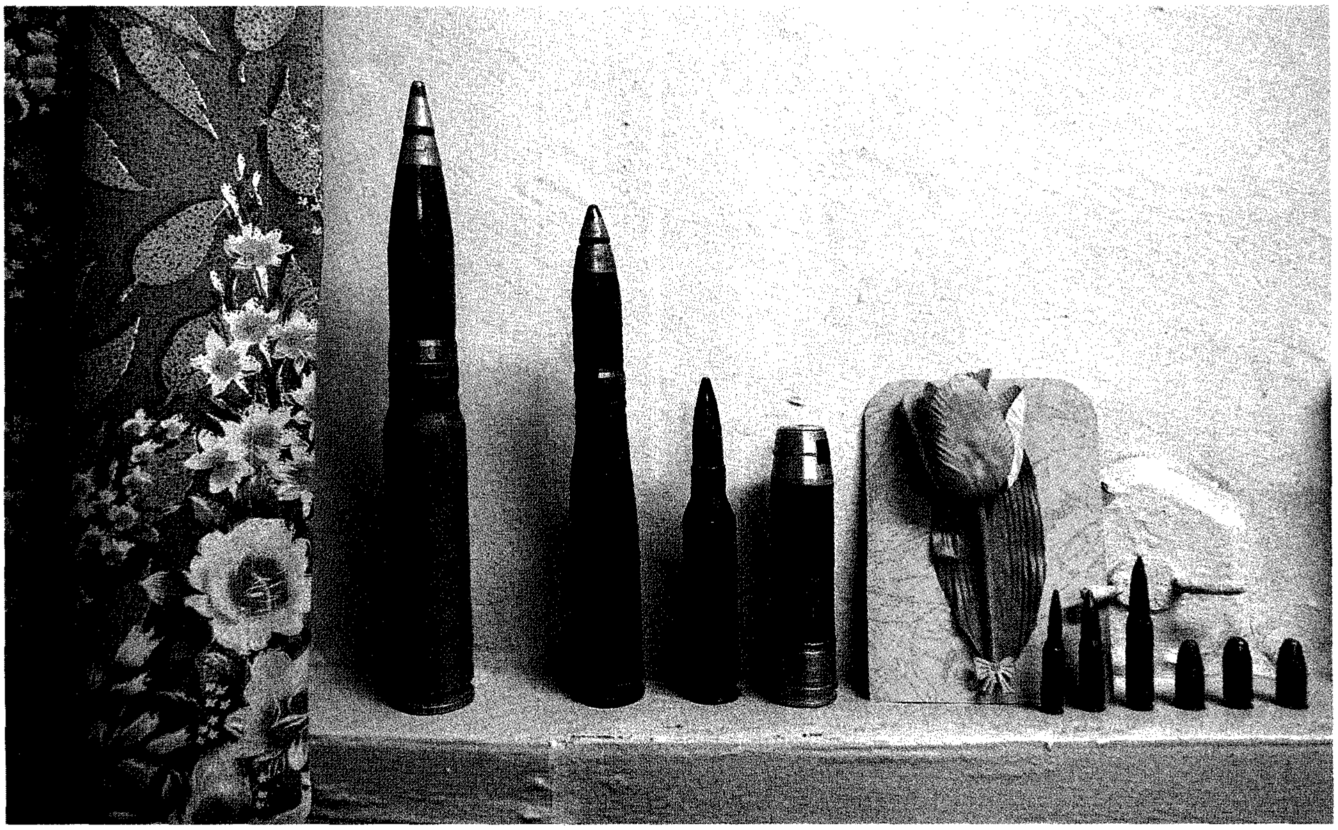

"Quetta, Pakistan, December 2001," by Alexandra Boulat, from the VII collective's show at Hasted Hunt.

includes filmed, photographed, and sketched documentation of the iconic "Spiral Jetty." Through Oct. 23. ♦ **"Building and Breaking the Grid, 1962-2002."** Through Jan. 8. ♦ **"Still Life: A Vital Theme"** uses works from the permanent collection to explore the still-life tradition in the twentieth century. Through Jan. 15. ♦ **"The New City: Sub/Urbia in Recent Photography."** Through Jan. 15. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Dinosaurs: Ancient Fossils, New Discoveries,"** a review of recent developments in the study of dinosaurs, provides insight into how the animals moved through their world. Through Jan. 8. ♦ **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter"** is back for an eighth year. Through May 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—Some one hundred paintings by the Netherlandish artist Hans Memling (ca. 1435-94) survive; of the thirty portraits, twenty are coming to the Frick for the exhibition **"Memling's Portraits."** Through Dec. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 11 to 5.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"André Kertész."** Through Nov. 27. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
Temporarily located in the Chelsea Art Museum, 556 W. 22nd St. (212-219-1222)—**Brian Jungen's** sculptures sound like Surrealist homework: use Nike sneakers, plastic lawn chairs, and cafeteria trays to represent Pacific Northwest tribal masks, whale skeletons, and prisoners incarcerated in the Canadian penal system. But Jungen manages the transpositions with satirical grace. The full-size skeletons hanging from the ceiling look ready for the Museum of Natural History, except that their bones are made of molded white patio furniture, just as the bird-headed totems look weirdly authentic, in spite of Air Jordan logos stamped on their leather plumage. The cafeteria trays make a low-budget minimalist cube, the distribution of their different colors registering the percentages of various races in Canada's prison population. Through Dec. 31. ♦ The seventh annual showing of new acquisitions in the **Altoids Curiously Strong Collection** isn't stellar by comparison to previous selections. Still, as a pocket-size survey of work by young artists from around the U.S., the exhibition is quietly exhilarating. Best is Yuken Teruya's delicate leafy tree, cut out of but not detached from the McDonald's bag that becomes its proscenium. Honorable mention goes to Rob Fischer's overpainted photo, which envelops a derelict mobile home in flames, and Juan Miguel Ramos's comically absorbing double-screen video, a meditation on multicultural karaoke. Through Oct. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"Slavery in New York,"** a historical and archeological study of the history of slavery in New York City. Through March 5. ♦ **"Nature and the American Vision."** Through Feb. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART
Flushing Meadows–Corona Park (718-592-9700)—**"Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark's Fake Estates."** Back in the bankrupt seventies, the city auctioned off minuscule slivers of land sandwiched between buildings or in other unusable locales. In 1973 and 1974, Gordon Matta-Clark (1943-78) purchased fifteen lots, called them "Fake Estates," and documented them with photographs, maps, and deeds. It's appropriate that this exhibition is in Queens—fourteen of the fifteen lots, which reverted back to the city after his death, were located in this borough. A collection of collages, video, and documents related to Matta-Clark's original project are scattered throughout the museum and even across its famous city panorama. Through Jan. 22. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Scratch"** presents work by the museum's three artists-in-residence for 2004-05: Michael Queenland, William Cordova, and Marc André Robinson. Through Oct. 23. ♦ **"hrlm: pictures,"** a survey of Harlem photographs by James Van Der Zee, Aaron Siskind, Gordon Parks, and Dawoud Bey, among others. Through Oct. 23. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

LAURIE ANDERSON
Anderson does her best to dispel the notion that it might be interesting to crawl inside the head of a famous artist. A handsome book of whimsical Chagall-like drawings describes dreams she had while touring and performing last year; one is materialized as a David Lynch-ish video in which a supine, motionless female figure is sniffed by a dog and photographed by an older man (the artist's brother) while Anderson looks on from behind a curtain. Perhaps the most disturbing drawing, from an art purist's perspective, finds Anderson dreaming that "Lou [Reed] and I have invented an enormous bubble wall. We don't know what to do with it so we invite several PR people over to see if they can think of what it might be good for." Through Oct. 22. (Sean Kelly, 528 W. 29th St. 212-239-1181.)

CANDICE BREITZ
Verging on silly, but perhaps the most fun to be had in Chelsea right now. "King" shows sixteen people, each discretely boxed in a video screen, dancing and singing along with Michael Jackson songs. The performers include impersonators, fans, and a belly dancer; their dorky, shower-singing enthusiasm is synchronized into a joyful a-cappella pop choir. "Queen" pulls the same trick, but with a grid of thirty people singing Madonna tunes; for some reason—perhaps because we only see the singers' faces and not their dancing bodies—this feels a bit more sordid, less magical. In back, "Mother & Father" (Breitz's contribution to the Venice Biennale) isolates actors on black screens and edits their performances as parents into riffs

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
YOUNG AT HEART

The composer La Monte Young has been living in Tribeca longer than the parents of some of today's hipsters have been alive. A refugee from academia, he curated a famous series of concerts at Yoko Ono's loft in 1960; his alternately madcap and hypnotic rituals helped spawn movements as various as Fluxus, musical minimalism, and psychedelic pop. Young celebrates his seventieth birthday this month, and he is as exactingly far out as ever, hosting concerts at Dream House, on Church Street. A few weeks ago, the Theatre of Eternal Music String Ensemble played his 1958 String Trio, an awesomely strange landscape of slowly shifting tone. There was no ventilation, so the event doubled as a session of hot yoga. Visitors were asked to point their toes away from a shrine in one corner of the room, in deference to Indian custom. The young man next to me carried a large push-button telephone, which, fortunately, did not ring. The experience wavered between the unbearable and the transcendent, coming to rest on the latter.

—Alex Ross

JOE CIARDIELLO

of tears, hugs, and door slams. All this channelled passionate intensity will, like a pop song, seem infectious or grating or possibly both. Through Oct. 29. (Sonnabend, 536 W. 22nd St. 212-627-1018.)

EDUARDO DEL VALLE AND MIRTA GOMEZ
This Cuban-born, Miami-based husband-and-wife team, who also have work in Yancey Richardson's back room, shows color photographs from a project that slips seductively from the reportorial to the abstract. Called "Fried Waters," it views the primitive process of harvesting salt in the Yucatán in a series of artful and increasingly compact landscapes and still-lifes. Images of what appear to be funky, site-specific sculpture installations, Gabriel Orozco style, give way to closeups of shallow water and accumulations of salt crystals that look like a cross between fish eggs and diamonds. Through Oct. 29. (Kempner, 501 W. 23rd St. 212-206-6872.)

SAM DURANT
The construction of a memorial is—as evidenced by the fracas surrounding the World Trade Center site—an essay in how the living relate to history. Durant attacks American self-pageantry with his "Proposal for White and Indian Dead Monument Transpositions, Washington, D.C.," in which a suite of pencil drawings and thirty tombstone-gray, reduced-scale copies depict markers from battlegrounds like Wounded Knee and Little Big Horn. Not surprisingly, of the thirty monuments surveyed, twenty-five commemorate white soldiers. Durant proposes (in a tabletop architectural model) installing these along the reflecting pool on the Mall, while the five memorials to slain Native Americans would be grouped at the foot of the Washington Monument. Through Oct. 22. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.)

TOM FRIEDMAN
Art's Thomas Edison is back with twenty-three new one-off wonders—conceptually acute drawings, objects, and constructions—in media including yarn, punched paper, Styrofoam, and pillow stuffing, often unnervingly fragile. (Not only don't touch, but be careful breathing.) A set of painted Styrofoam legs leaps; "10,000 Thoughts" spells out the word "thoughts" nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine times in crisscross lettering on a crumpled piece of paper on the floor; pornographic photographs superimposed onto each other yield a delicate monochrome; and a big dusty blue bee cantilevers from a bigger dusty blue cube. Through Oct. 29. (Feature Inc., 530 W. 25th St. 212-675-7772.)

DANIEL LIBESKIND
Sketches, drawings, and models by the architect commissioned to redesign the World Trade Center site. The projects detailed include the Jewish Museum in Berlin, the Denver Art Museum, and costume designs for a production of "Tristan and Isolde." Through Nov. 5. (Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 212-633-6999.)

ROY MCMAKIN
In two installations, McMakin blurs the line between gallery and furniture showroom. At the Twenty-fourth Street space, the pieces look homey but aren't functional: sinks and tubs have no bottoms; a coffee table, chairs, and couch are fused together like puzzle pieces; a set of cookware is decommissioned, à la Man Ray's famous iron, by a row of tacks. The whole thing feels like a cross between a Surrealist exhibition and a minimal Willy Wonka stage set. The equation is reversed on Twenty-first Street, where McMakin remakes, in utilitarian gray and from memory, all the furniture in his grandparents' house in Oklahoma. Through Oct. 29. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. and 521 W. 21st St. 212-243-0200.)

JOEL STERNFELD
No matter how handsome, the thirty landscapes and environmental portraits in Sternfeld's book project "Sweet Earth: Experimental Utopias in America" sit uncomfortably on the wall. Each is accompanied by a block of text explaining what is rarely evident in the pictures themselves: the philosophy of a back-to-the-land settlement, the significance of an unusual structure, the brief history of a garden, a community, an ideal. A few photos (notably one of a fresh-faced young woman with pea pods in the pocket of her white shirt) communicate vividly without these texts, but most will puzzle viewers reluctant to spend their gallery time reading. Through Oct. 22. (Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100.)

"DIALOGUE: BALDESSARI, PRINCE, RUSCHA, WOOL"
There is one word painting on view by each of the four artists in this show. They read, respectively, as follows: "Everything is purged from this painting but art, no ideas have entered this work." "The way she looks in the morning! She ran after the garbage man and said, 'Am I too late for the garbage?' He said, 'No, jump in.'" "Adios." "The harder you look the harder you look." What is there about this show not captured in these printed words on magazine paper? Plenty, but it must be pondered in visual space. Through Oct. 22. (Rubenstein, 534 W. 24th St. 212-627-8000.)

Short List

ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ: Bruce Silverstein, 535 W. 24th St. 212-627-3930. Through Nov. 19. **ROY LICHTENSTEIN:** Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111. Through Oct. 22. **PHILIP PEARLSTEIN:** Cuningham, 541 W. 25th St. 212-242-2772. Through Oct. 22. **ED RUSCHA:** Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610. Through Nov. 5. **KRZYSZTOF WODICZKO:** Lelong, 528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470. Through Oct. 22. **"VII":** Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006. Through Dec. 23.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

ANTHONY BURDIN
What passes for an installation looks more like the remains of a raucous party or a live show after which the band neglected to load out—and it actually is the remains of Burdin's opening-night party, where he performed a concert of hard-rock covers. Left behind are an amplifier, a guitar smashed through a wall, and a drum kit, as well as signifiers of the rock-and-roll life style: tie-dyed paintings, a pair of Marc Jacobs sunglasses with a lens popped out. The best work is a claustrophobic video of a drum performance taped inside a car. These follow in the steps of his booth at last year's Frieze Art Fair, in London, where the artist and gallerist were censured, naturally, for blasting music. Through Oct. 31. (Maccarone, 45 Canal St. 212-431-4977.)

"TRACKING SUBURBIA" / "DO YOU LIKE STUFF?"
Suburbia is mostly an American invention, inspired by early Dutch and English settlers' predilection for detached houses, but here photographers from Fischli & Weiss to Jean-Frédéric Schnyder plumb the depths—or, more precisely, scan the bland surfaces—of Euro-suburbia. More charming is the companion show, "Do You Like Stuff?," which explores the drive to catalogue, collect, and display information. Barb Choit's photographic archive of eBay lots ranges from a dancing Coke can to a full-scale automobile-transport trailer. Mike Bouchet's text-only DVD "film series" offers a chance to read "great" works from "Star Wars" to "You've Got Mail" in scrolling script, and Frank Olive's installation "Useful Things" encourages visitors to take something with them, like a sponge, earplugs, or a banana. Through Oct. 22. (Swiss Institute, 495 Broadway. 212-925-2035.)

Short List

RICHARD DUPONT: Williams, 313 bis W. 4th St. 212-229-2757. Through Oct. 29. **JAMES HOPKINS:** Rivington Arms, 102 Rivington St. 646-654-3213. Through Oct. 22. **ALEX KATZ:** Peter Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441. Through Nov. 12.

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
Amidst the compelling lineup of its fall season at City Center—which includes the company's première of Jerome Robbins's meditation on sexual

awakening and narcissism, "Afternoon of a Faun," revivals of Agnes de Mille's boisterous "Rodeo," Antony Tudor's "Dark Elegies," and Balanchine's lyrical masterpiece "Apollo," as well as Mark Morris's playful "Gong"—stands a gripping and utterly original work, Kurt Jooss's "The Green Table," from 1932. In eight scenes evoking the medieval *Totentanz*—dance of death—Jooss illustrates the loss and pointlessness of war in a spare, poignant language that alternates between expressionistic aggressivity and austere depictions of despair. The ever-present figure of Death will be performed by the lanky David Hallberg (alternating with the corps dancer Isaac Stappas). The season's world première is the twenty-six-year-old Canadian Peter Quanz's "Kaleidoscope," a neoclassical plotless ballet filled with quick, clean movements, closely reflecting the shimmering score, Saint-Saëns's Piano Concerto No. 5. ♦ Oct. 19 at 7: The première of "Afternoon of a Faun" (with the principal dancer Julie Kent, celebrating her twentieth season), the revival première of "Rodeo" (with Erica Cornejo in the leading role), "Gong," "Paquita Pas de Deux" (danced by Irina Dvorovenko, who returns to performing after having a baby girl last March, and her husband, Maxim Beloserkovsky), and excerpts from "The Howling Cat" (Jose Manuel Carreño and Paloma Herrera). ♦ Oct. 20 at 7:30: The première of "Kaleidoscope" (Gillian Murphy, Ethan Stiefel, Veronika Part, and Beloserkovsky), "Les Sylphides," "Afternoon of a Faun" (Kent and Stiefel), and "Paquita Pas de Deux" (Carreño and Herrera). ♦ Oct. 21 at 8: The company première of "The Green Table" (David Hallberg), Balanchine's "Apollo" (Carreño, Kent, Stella Abrera, and Dvorovenko), and "Gong." ♦ Oct. 22 at 2: "Les Sylphides," "Afternoon of a Faun" (Abrera and Hallberg), "Paquita Pas de Deux," and "Rodeo" (with the diminutive firecracker Xiomara Reyes). ♦ Oct. 22 at 8: "Kaleidoscope" (Herman Cornejo, Sarah Lane, Part, and Beloserkovsky), "Gong," and "Rodeo." ♦ Oct. 23 at 2: "Gong," "Apollo" (Stiefel, Herrera, Maria Riccetto, and Murphy), and "Rodeo." ♦ Oct. 25 at 7:30: "Apollo" (Carreño, Kent, Abrera, and Dvorovenko), "Gong," and "The Green Table." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Through Nov. 6.)

PARSONS DANCE COMPANY

The unabashed populist David Parsons offers two New York premières set to feel-good music at the Joyce. "Wolfgang" is lighthearted, ballet-inflected Mozartiana, while "DMB" is set to earnest political rock by the Dave Matthews Band. "Shining Star," Parsons's 2004 hit for the Ailey company, funks it up with Earth, Wind & Fire, white pants suits, and plenty of swaying hips. Eight repertory favorites round out two alternating programs. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Oct. 18-21 at 8, Oct. 22 at 2 and 8, and Oct. 23 at 2 and 7:30. Through Oct. 30.)

ANN LIV YOUNG

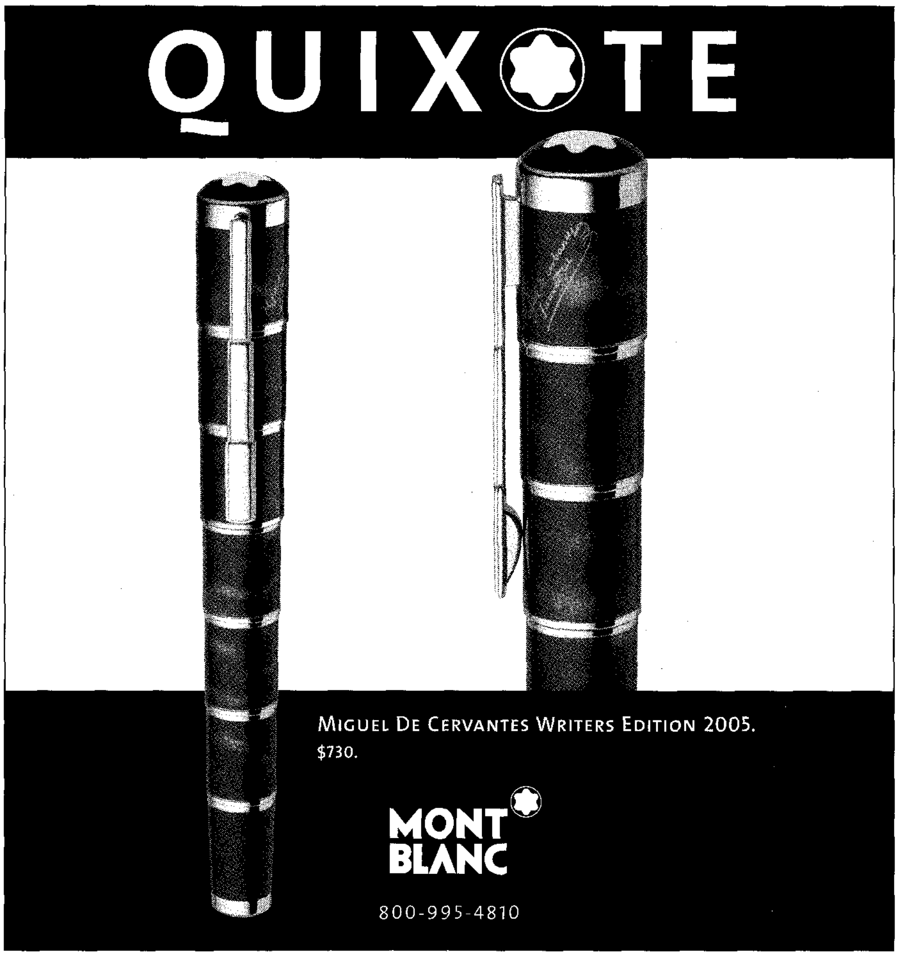
A piece for "mature audiences," "Michael" is assertive, unflinching dance theatre. Young's first evening-length work continues her interrogation of the observer's gaze—a point she presses with shocking acts, like a man literally ejaculating onstage. The offbeat performers (some of whom lack dance training) speak lines and sing; when they dance they pound the downbeats like women at an aerobics class. The main action is crammed into a forty-two-by-ten-foot trailer; outside its window, a girl on a tire swing spins and spins. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Oct. 19-22 at 7:30.)

"HERD OF BULLS"

The choreographer Saar Harari draws on his service with the Israeli Defense Forces for this new mixed-gender quartet. Despite the title, the movement is more a delicate martial-arts demonstration than a boot-camp drill or a military stampede. Its exploration of animal instinct ranges past the violent and murderous impulses of the body to the sensual and seductive. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Oct. 19-21 at 8, Oct. 22 at 5 and 8, and Oct. 23 at 5.)

"CARACOLAS DE UN MAR DE FUEGO"

Maestra Maria Elena Anaya and her Mexico-based, all-female troupe continue their program of mod-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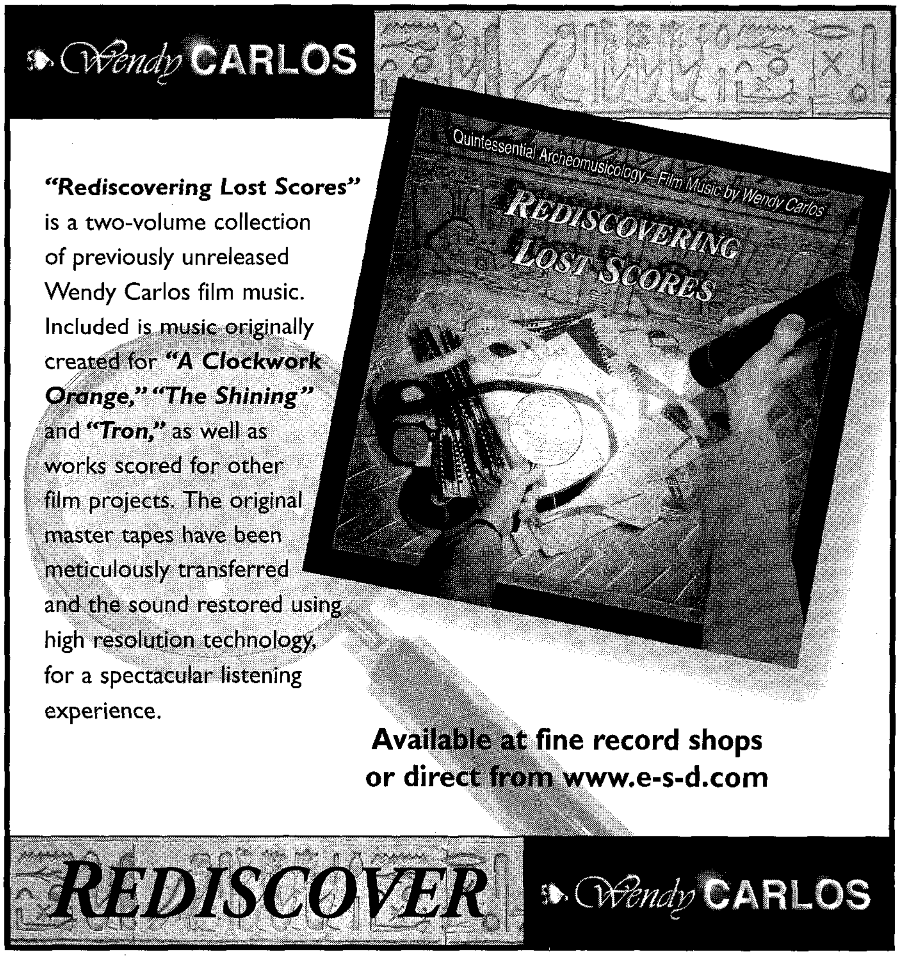
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ern dance, flamenco, and song. (La Mama E.T.C., 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Oct. 20-22 at 7:30 and Oct. 23 at 2:30 and 7:30.)

CLARE BYRNE DANCE

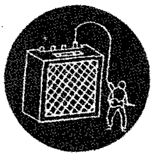
"Sweet Chariots" is a concert of dances by a self-confessed "white girl who can't stop dancing to gospel music." In the quartet "Song of a Lark," the gospel is Aretha Franklin's, and the dancers pull each other up from the ground. In "Swing High, Fly By," it's Eric Reed's jazz, and a trio takes to the air in a Lindy Hop. For the duet "Fording the Night," there is no music and the movement is meditative, but the gospel spirit, both sad and jubilant, is still felt. With special guests Nicholas Leichter and Amy Larimer. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. Oct. 20-23 at 8.)

"BADMAN"

In the alternative masculine universe posited by the choreographer Luis Lara Malvacías, guys in white button-down shirts hoist long wooden sticks; when they turn around, their shirt backs are laced like doublets. As the eight men play at being racehorses or tap at faceless dolls with short sticks, the murky outlines of their enigmatic social system begin to emerge. The electroacoustic composer Ivo Bol mixes the ambient sound score live. (St. Mark's-in-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Oct. 20-23 at 8:30.)

"THE STORY OF TAP"

The amiable Hank Smith brings back his popular tapping talk show, interviewing some of New York's better tap dancers over a three-week series. This week his guests are the young lions Ayodele Casel and Michelle Dorrance, as well as Jared Grimes, DeWitt Fleming, Jr., and Calvin Booker. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, 2nd fl. 212-219-0736. For a full schedule, see www.dixonplace.org. Oct. 21-22 at 8. Through Oct. 29.)



POP NOTES
GREAT SCOTS

The Scottish rock quartet Franz Ferdinand have sold almost a million albums in America, and though their music—a taut, thin, hopped-up dance rock—must have something to do with their success, what sets them apart from their equally tightly trousered peers is a dastardly secret: they really like being a band. Nearly constant touring is one manifestation of their cheerful work ethic; their several New York appearances in 2004 showed that having a taste for Russian Constructivist graphics can—assumptions be damned—go hand in hand with sweating, dancing, and even smiling. Their anti-depressive tendencies are also in evidence in their two very similar records, the second of which is the just-released **"You Could Have It So Much Better"** (Domino).

Franz Ferdinand's songs most often begin with an energetic, slightly inept rock version of a disco beat, and the band's strongest suit is the way they work around that beat, using two guitars and a bass to create clever little machines that honk and beep in memorable ways. There's some subtly efficient arranging in "Do You Want To," the fabulous single from their new album. As with their previous American hit, "Take Me Out," the song starts with a small rock stomp that is suddenly overwhelmed by the ever-present Scottish dance beat. The singer, Alex Kapranos, then chants a series of snotty remarks overheard at parties—it's a method of generating lyrics that you could imagine Mick Jagger using in the mid-nineteen-seventies. There's a dose of sexual ambiguity in "Do You Want To," as there was in the first album's "Michael," making the band a refreshingly gay-friendly presence on the *Billboard* charts. The only thing holding Franz Ferdinand back from the heights reached by other formulaic bands—the Ramones, say, or AC/DC—is a truly great singer. Kapranos is winning and sly onstage, but his recorded voice conveys little emotional information beyond a saucy self-regard and the pose he strikes in his lyrics—that of the jaded B-plus student—is hard to love. Still, the music moves along smartly and crisply and usually compensates for the smarm. Their minor but remarkable achievement is to keep you moving and prevent boredom from setting in. Dismiss them only if you are already dancing or never bored.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA

Oct. 19 and Oct. 22 at 8: Bryn Terfel, a singer at once majestic and approachable, commands the stage in the title role of **"Falstaff,"** joined by a cast that includes such singers as Heidi Grant Murphy, Patricia Racette, Stephanie Blythe, Matthew Polenzani, and Roberto Frontali; James Levine conducts. (These are the final performances.) ♦ Oct. 20 at 7:30 and Oct. 24 at 8: Cesare Lievi's bouncy production of Rossini's **"La Cenerentola"** has the innocent charm of vintage Saturday-morning cartoons; it returns with Olga Borodina, a formidable mezzo-soprano and a gifted comedienne, in the title role and Barry Banks as Don Ramiro; Antonello Allemandi. ♦ Oct. 21 and Oct. 25 at 8: The house is loading a promising cast into its latest revival of **"Così Fan Tutte,"** the most astringent and complex of Mozart's operas; it includes Barbara Frittoli, Magdalena Kožená, Matthew Polenzani, Mariusz Kwiecien, and the redoubtable Thomas Allen; Levine. ♦ Oct. 22 at 1:30: Sonja Frisell's staging of **"Aida"** uses breathtaking sets and resplendent costumes to create a world that matches the mystery and grandeur of Verdi's imaginary Egypt. With Michèle Crider in the title role, along with Dolora Zajick, Salvatore Licitra, Lado Antaneli, and Paata Burchuladze; James Conlon. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

Oct. 20 at 7:30 and Oct. 22 at 1:30: **"Il Barbiere di Siviglia,"** with Jennifer Rivera, Hugh Russell, John Tessier, and Nikolay Didenko; Joseph Rescigno, an expert conductor of Italian repertory, is in the pit. ♦ Oct. 21 at 8: City Opera's production of **"Tosca,"** set in the Fascist Italy of the nineteen-thirties, returns with Carla Thelen Hanson, Jorge Antonio Pita, and Todd Thomas in the leading roles; John DeMain. ♦ Oct. 22 at 8: The final performance of Paul Dukas's **"Ariane et Barbe-Bleue"** (1907), a fin-de-siècle sleeper that hasn't been heard in New York in nine decades. This nearly all-female work—a Symbolist take on the Bluebeard tale—is built in the kind of broad paragraphs that Strauss and Hofmannsthal would later perfect in "Rosenkavalier." But the music is ravishing, and Renate Behle, while not a glamorous singer, has enough heft and stamina to make a convincing Ariane. The orchestra does justice to Dukas's glistening orchestration; Leon Botstein conducts vigorously, but the mysteries of phrasing are beyond his grasp. ♦ Oct. 23 at 1:30 and Oct. 25 at 7:30: Richard Rodney Bennett's **"The Mines of Sulphur,"** an opera noir set in Restoration England, has its New York première with a cast headed by Caroline Worra, Jessie Raven, and Mark Duffin; George Manahan. (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

Three twentieth-century giants, running the gamut from the conservative to the avant-garde, get their due on the orchestra's latest program, in which Gianandrea Noseda conducts Bartók's "Dance Suite," Britten's "Sinfonia da Requiem," and Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3 (with Simon Trpčeski, making his Philharmonic début). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Oct. 20 at 7:30 and Oct. 21-22 at 8.)

CECILIA BARTOLI AND ORCHESTRA LA SCINTILLA

The fabulous mezzo-soprano is a longtime favorite at the Zürich Opera; La Scintilla, a period-instrument band made up of members of the house orchestra, accompanies her to Carnegie Hall for a concert that will feature a selection of rediscovered arias from operas by Handel, Caldara, and Alessandro Scarlatti. (212-247-7800. Oct. 19 at 8.)

"SACRED MUSIC IN A SACRED SPACE"

Kent Tritle's acclaimed series with the Choir and Orchestra of the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola continues with a performance of Haydn's "The Creation," sung in German. (Park Ave. at 84th St. 212-288-2520. Oct. 20 at 8.)

ROYAL STOCKHOLM PHILHARMONIC

Alan Gilbert, the distinguished group's young American music director, leads two concerts at Carnegie Hall. ♦ Oct. 22 at 8: Anne Sofie von Otter joins the orchestra in a group of songs by Stenhammar, Sibelius, and Alfvén, a prelude for Mahler's Symphony No. 5. ♦ Oct. 23 at 2: The New York première of Anders Hillborg's "Exquisite Corpse," followed by Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto (with Lars Vogt) and Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony. (212-247-7800.)

TRINITY CHURCH CHOIR: "LES NOCES"

Stravinsky's atavistic ballet score, a startling re-creation of a traditional Russian wedding, shares the program with music by Britten (the "Cantata Misericordium"), Mozart, and Arvo Pärt; Owen Burdick conducts. (Broadway at Wall St. 212-279-4200. Oct. 23 at 3.)

KING'S SINGERS: "SACRED BRIDGES"

The matchless British close-harmony group, noticing the trend toward non-Western music, teams up with the Middle Eastern early-music ensemble Sarband to perform settings of the Psalms of David in Hebrew, Turkish, and French. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 212-721-6500. Oct. 23 at 4.)

EUROPA GALANTE

The violinist Fabio Biondi's crackling period-instrument band returns to Lincoln Center to perform works by Mozart (the Symphony No. 11 in D Major), Telemann, and Vivaldi ("The Four Seasons"). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Oct. 23 at 5.)

RECITALS

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG: "SINCE THE SEVENTIES"

This invaluable organization, the brainchild of the pianists Steven Blier and Michael Barrett, has been an advocate for some of New York's best songwriters of the last two decades. The next concert includes songs by such composers as Bolcom, Musto, Corigliano, and Guettel; Michelle Areyzaga, Susan Narucki, and Mel Ulrich, among others, sing them. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Oct. 19 at 8.)

CARNEGIE HALL RECITALS

Oct. 20 at 7:30: Christopher Maltman, an engaging young British baritone who just completed a run as Strauss's Harlequin at the Met, sings songs by Schumann, Mahler, Hahn, and Poulenc, accompanied by the stylish Malcolm Martineau.

(Zankel Hall.) ♦ Oct. 20 at 8: Pierre-Laurent Aimard, who combines the florid elegance of the French piano school with his own restless, intellectual verve, performs a quartet of Debussy's "Préludes" (Book I) along with works by Ravel ("Gaspard de la Nuit"), Boulez, and Schumann ("Carnaval"). (Stern Auditorium.) ♦ Oct. 21 at 7:30: The Borodin String Quartet—still with its founding cellist, Valentin Berlinsky—offers an intense program of Beethoven (the "Serioso" Quartet and the "Grosse Fuge") and Shostakovich (the valedictory Quartet No. 15 in E-Flat Minor). (Zankel Hall.) (212-247-7800.)

MARILYN NONKEN AND URSULA OPPENS

The two pianists (along with the percussionists Tom Kolor and Dominic Donato) join forces to offer the New York première of "Bring Them Home," a new antiwar piece by the American maverick Frederic Rzewski, a master of musical polemics; Nonken also plays Rzewski's famous solo work "The People United Will Never Be Defeated!" (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Oct. 20 at 8.)

JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET

The veteran ensemble, still combining the adventurous and the traditional, offers the world première of Ezequiel Viñao's "The Loss and the Silence" (inspired by a Tolkien story) along with quartets by Mozart and Beethoven (in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 131). (Alice Tully Hall. Oct. 20 at 8. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406.)

MUSIC AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Oct. 21 at 8: Edward Arron is not only one of New York's most exciting young cellists but also an inventive impresario, and the Metropolitan Museum Artists in Concert ensemble is his vehicle. Some excellent friends (such as the violinist Colin Jacobsen and the pianist Jeremy Denk) join him in music by Beethoven, Schumann (the Piano Quintet), Cage (the String Quartet in Four Parts), and Cowell. ♦ Oct. 22 at 8: The museum's "Piano Forte" series begins with the estimable Sergey Schepkin, performing Bach's Partita No. 6 in E Minor along with Brahms's Two Rhapsodies, Op. 79, and Seven Fantasies, Op. 116. (212-570-3949.)

CONCERTANTE

The vibrant young American string sextet, with the mezzo-soprano Kate Lindsey, offers music by Beethoven, Respighi ("Il Tramonto," a lavish setting of Shelley), and Dvořák (the Sextet). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Oct. 23 at 3.)

MOVIES
OPENING

AFTER INNOCENCE

Jessica Sanders directed this documentary, about people who have been exonerated of crimes that they were convicted of and who are now trying to make their way in society. Opening Oct. 21. (Quad Cinema.)

CONGO: WHITE KING, RED RUBBER, BLACK DEATH

A docudrama directed by Peter Bate, about Belgium's King Leopold II, who pretended to be a protector of Africans fleeing Arab slave traders but who was actually responsible for the deaths of millions of Congolese people. Opening Oct. 21. (Quad Cinema.)

DOOM

The Rock stars in an action thriller in which a research station on Mars must be saved from a hostile alien invasion. Directed by Andrzej Bartkowiak. Opening Oct. 21. (In wide release.)

DREAMER: INSPIRED BY A TRUE STORY

Kurt Russell stars in a drama about a demoralized horse trainer who tries to save an injured racehorse for the sake of his daughter (Dakota Fanning). With Kris Kristofferson, Elisabeth Shue, and David Morse. Written and directed by John Gatins. Opening Oct. 21. (In wide release.)

INNOCENCE

A mystery drama based on a Frank Wedekind novella from 1888, in which a young dead girl attends

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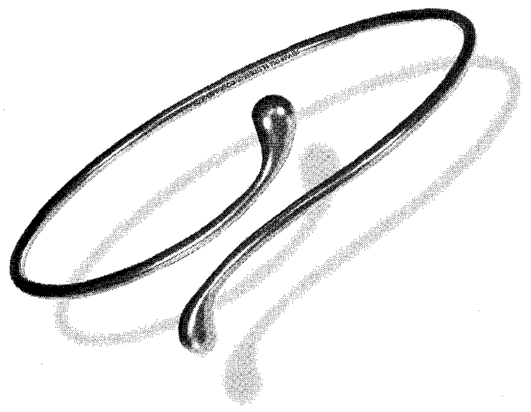

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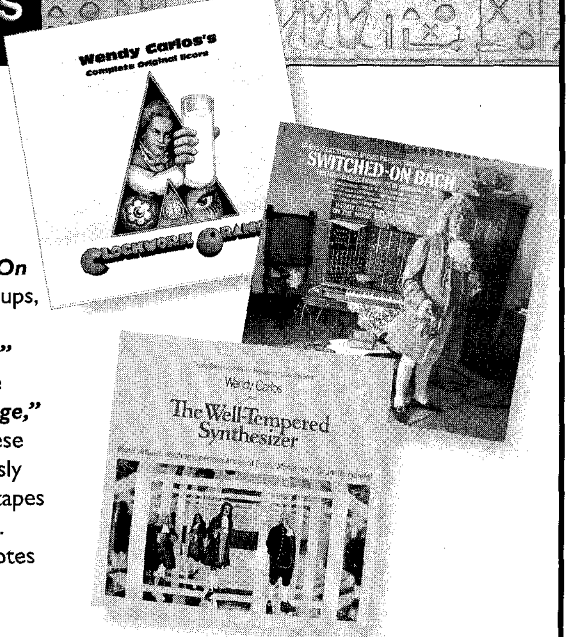

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REDISCOVER Wendy CARLOS

an underground boarding school. Directed by Lucile Hadzihalilovic. In French. Opening Oct. 21. (Cinema Village.)

KISS KISS, BANG BANG
An action comedy directed by Shane Black (the screenwriter for "Lethal Weapon"), in which a petty thief (Robert Downey, Jr.) gets involved in a murder investigation in L.A. With Val Kilmer and Michelle Monaghan. Opening Oct. 21. (In wide release.)

NORTH COUNTRY
Niki Caro ("Whale Rider") directed this drama, about the first prominent sexual-harassment case in the U.S., which was brought by an iron miner (Charlize Theron) in 1984. With Frances McDormand, Sissy Spacek, and Woody Harrelson. Opening Oct. 21. (In wide release.)

PROTOCOLS OF ZION
A documentary explores post-9/11 anti-Semitism. Directed by Marc Levin. Opening Oct. 21. (Angelika Film Center and *Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)*

SHOPGIRL
Steve Martin stars in an adaptation of his novella, about a wealthy divorcé who falls in love with a department-store salesgirl (Claire Danes). Directed by Anand Tucker. Opening Oct. 21. (In wide release.)

STAY
Marc Forster ("Finding Neverland") directed this thriller, about a psychologist whose suicidal patient makes predictions that come true. With Ewan McGregor, Naomi Watts, and Ryan Gosling. Opening Oct. 21. (In wide release.)

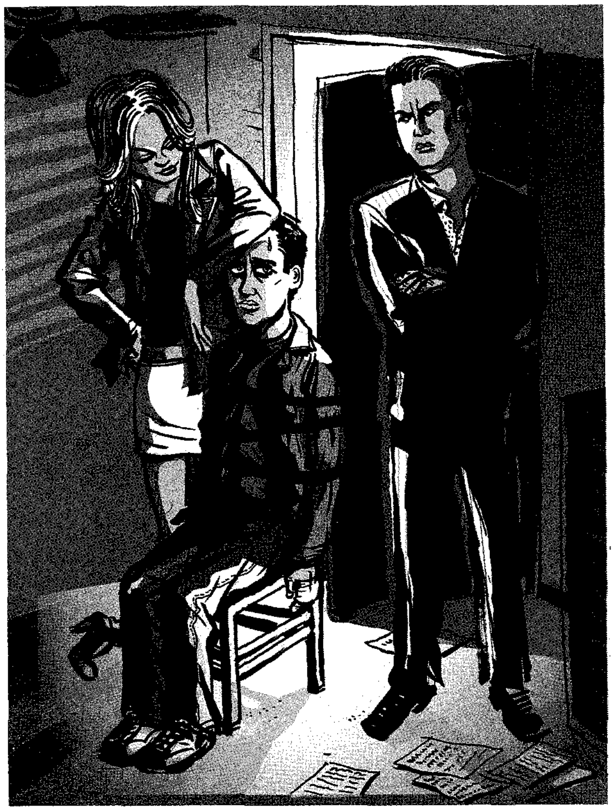
THREE OF HEARTS: A POSTMODERN FAMILY
A documentary about a threesome (two men and a woman) who raise a baby together as a family. Directed by Susan Kaplan. Opening Oct. 19. (IFC Center.)

USHPIZIN
A comic drama from Israel, about a religious Jewish family who take in ex-convicts as guests in order to fulfill their Sukkoth holiday duties. In Hebrew. Opening Oct. 19. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

NOW PLAYING

THE BOYS OF ST. VINCENT
In this scarily prescient movie about pedophilia in a Catholic order, made in 1992 and based on a case from the nineteen-seventies, Henry Czerny gives an unmatched performance of narcissistic evil as Brother Peter Lavin, who fixes his bullet-like blue eyes on a ten-year-old newcomer named Kevin (Johnny Morina) and makes him his special boy at the St. Vincent Orphanage. Lavin runs this hallowed institution in a Catholic town in Newfoundland with deceptive efficiency. But Czerny takes us deep into the rage, loathing, and desire that lie beneath the Brother's aura of holy masculine authority. It's hard to tell what's more horrifying—the scene in which Brother Lavin terrorizes Kevin until the boy calls him "Mom" or, fifteen years later, the moment when the defrocked Lavin tells his revolted wife that Kevin and the other orphans never appreciated his love for them. Thanks to the empathy and intelligence of the director, John N. Smith, the cycle of abuse registers with whirlpool impact. Shown in two parts.—*Michael Sragow* (Thalia Theatre; Oct. 23 and Oct. 25.)

CAPOTE
How could Truman Capote, with his high, thin, goose-quill voice and his floating palms, possibly have gained the trust of the straightforward men and women of Holcomb, Kansas, when he went there for this magazine in 1959 to investigate the pointless slaughter of four members of the Clutter family—the murders that became the subject of Capote's masterpiece, "In Cold Blood"? The writer Dan Futterman and the director Bennett Miller tell us how, and the wonderful Philip Seymour Hoffman first captures Capote physically and then works inward to the vulnerable yet rotting soul. This is easily the most intelligent and detailed film ever made about a writer's working method and character. When Capote gets a look at one of the murderers, Perry Smith (Clifton Collins, Jr.), the focus of the movie becomes the intimate, artistically necessary but morally questionable relation between artist and felon. With Catherine Keener as the novelist Harper Lee; Mark Pellegrino as Perry's partner, Dick Hickock; and Bob Balaban as the *New Yorker* editor William Shawn, who is pictured, bizarrely, as hungry for the bloody details of the crime.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 10/10/05.) (In wide release.)



Shane Black's "Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang" opens October 21.

PAUL HOPPE

THE CONSTANT GARDENER
In this frenzied adaptation of a John le Carré novel, Ralph Fiennes plays a refined but bumbling British diplomat who arrives in Kenya with his belligerent new wife (Rachel Weisz). Impatient with niceties, she goes after the pharmaceutical giants, who are testing a new drug and covering up the results. When she dies, apparently in an accident, her loving and uncomprehending husband is forced to retrace her steps and rekindle some of her fire. The movie is a curious, roiling mix of genres that stirs marital romance into a heated indictment of a vast, conspiratorial crime. The director is Fernando Meirelles, who has imported the busy style of his last picture, "City of God," and given it an extra jolt; the images of Africa, forever in hot pursuit of one another, leave you not so much exhilarated as exhausted, long before the story is done. With Danny Huston and a mischievous Bill Nighy.—*Anthony Lane* (9/5/05) (In wide release.)

DUMA
The director Carroll Ballard ("The Black Stallion," "Never Cry Wolf") returns with another gorgeously shot nature adventure, the tale of a boy who adopts a baby cheetah and sets out to return it to the wild. The film's early plot conventions are less than engaging, but, once the boy (played amiably by Alexander Michaletos) takes off on his mostly solitary trek across the threatening African terrain, Ballard's film rises with elegant simplicity. Africa's rich landscape and its wildlife are stunningly presented, and lessons of courage and responsibility are explored with an affecting spirit.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

ELIZABETHTOWN
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

FLIGHTPLAN
Jodie Foster stars as a grief-stricken aeronautical engineer travelling home to New York with her six-year-old daughter to bury her husband. When she awakes after a short nap and finds her child gone, none of the other passengers remember seeing the little girl, and it's up to Foster, in perfect closeup, to act up a storm and demand action. With gliding camerawork and amazing production design (the two-story aircraft was built by Alexander Hammond), the director, Robert Schwentke, gives Foster plenty of room in which to panic. But the film is seriously underwritten and devolves into a ludicrous finale.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

GOOD NIGHT, AND GOOD LUCK
George Clooney's nifty account of Edward R. Murrow's historic prime-time assaults on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, in 1954, imitates many of Murrow's best qualities—it's swift, elegant, grimly humorous, and effective. David Strathairn gets the suavely streamlined Murrow perfectly—the pomaded jet-black hair, the thick brows and unblinking eyes, the curt, rhyming syntax and firm emphasis. Celebrating the end of McCarthyism is only part of Clooney's game. His most serious intention appears to be to deliver a blow to the patella of a somnolent American press that, until recently, has indulged the Bush Administration's most extravagant smears and lies. He has completely succeeded. With Clooney himself as Murrow's partner, Fred Friendly, and Frank Langella as the CBS chairman William S. Paley. Robert Elswit did the black-and-white cinematography, which matches kinescopes of McCarthy's actual speeches.—*D.D.* (10/10/05) (In wide release.)

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE
David Cronenberg's latest is a noirish story about a seemingly settled Indiana man, Tom Stall (Viggo Mortensen), who displays an unsuspected talent for violence when a couple of killers invade the café he runs in a small town. Soon after, a mobster from Philadelphia with a glass eye (Ed Harris) shows up and addresses Tom as "Joey." Is some sort of buried past taking over Tom's life? The movie asks us to believe that one man can carry two entirely different personalities within him and still be as sane as daylight. Cronenberg's direction, mirroring the split in Tom, is alternately measured and frighteningly explosive, and, as always, he gives the movie a nasty underlay of sexual perversity. With Maria Bello, Ashton Holmes, and, as still another Philadelphia mobster, William Hurt, who seems to be having a ball.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

IN HER SHOES
Unlovely Rose (Toni Collette) is a lawyer living alone in Philadelphia. From time to time she is called upon to rescue, house, or help her wayward sister Maggie (Cameron Diaz), whose hobbies include falling into alcoholic stupors and collecting unsuitable men. Finally, the strain becomes too great, and Maggie flees in desperation to Florida, where Ella (Shirley MacLaine), the formidable grandmother whom neither sister has seen since childhood, resides in a retirement home. From here, Curtis Hanson's movie plays two tunes in parallel—the taming of Maggie, under benign Florida sunshine, and the blossoming of Rose in the hands of Simon (Mark Feuerstein), a colleague from her law firm. Hanson and his screenwriter, Susannah Grant, are efficient managers of the emotional progress made by their characters; but why does it take more than two hours to arrive at a reconciliation that was visible in the first ten minutes? In comparison with Hanson's other work, in "L.A. Confidential" and "Wonder Boys," this project feels dangerously confected, sliding at times toward the cute. The best reason to stick with

it is the scene in which Cameron Diaz reads an Elizabeth Bishop poem to an elderly blind man, played with curt charm by Norman Lloyd.—*A.L.* (10/17/05) (In wide release.)

THE PRIZE WINNER OF DEFIANCE, OHIO
In the nineteen-fifties, Evelyn Ryan supported her ten children, despite her husband's drunken fury, with her frequent winnings from twenty-five-words-or-less contest entries. Julianne Moore, dispensing oracular wisdom with superhuman serenity in the face of chaos, seems illuminated from within as the Emily Dickinson of jingle writers. The writer-director Jane Anderson brings this fierce woman to life but traps her in a prosaic drama. The snappy historical reconstruction and the engaging cast—including Woody Harrelson as the husband and Ellary Porterfield as the literary daughter, "Tuff" (who wrote the memoir on which the film is based)—are outweighed by the film's distracting visual flashiness and formulaic structure. Still, the inner drama of a sensitive child watching an extraordinary mother is far greater than even this film's ordinariness can spoil.—*Richard Brody* (In wide release.)

PROOF
Catherine (Gwyneth Paltrow) appears to have inherited the mathematical gifts of her father, Robert (Anthony Hopkins). The question is, has he also handed down his fragility of mind? The kinship of brilliance and madness is not exactly the freshest topic for investigation, and John Madden's film, adapted from David Auburn's play, doesn't bring much to the party. There is suspense, of a kind, when a new mathematical proof of startling ambition—and uncertain provenance—is found in Robert's desk after his death, but apart from that the movie unfolds in a mood of worrisome glumness. When Catherine's non-geeky sister Claire (Hope Davis) arrives from New York for the funeral, we are meant to find her mean and brittle, but there is much to be said for her exasperation, and, as is so often the case, what struck theatre audiences as smart and provoking winds up onscreen looking smug. With Jake Gyllenhaal as a math graduate and part-time drummer, who would be well advised not to give up his day job.—*A.L.* (9/19/05) (In wide release.)

SERENITY
Joss Whedon, the creator of "Buffy, the Vampire Slayer," gives the big-screen treatment to his other, short-lived series, a rollicking Western set in outer space. The movie adaptation is necessarily exposition-heavy, as characters are reintroduced and new ones are added, but its witty, action-packed story is effortlessly entertaining. The wisecracking crew (Nathan Fillion and Gina Torres, among others) of the spaceship Serenity are rebel fighters out to wreak havoc on the devious plans of the tyrannical Alliance. The lo-fi look of the film makes it play like a schoolyard yarn, in which the evil bullies get their eventual comeuppance.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

THE SQUID AND THE WHALE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

TIM BURTON'S CORPSE BRIDE
Tim Burton returns with another stop-motion-animation movie that's both beautiful and a bit disturbing to watch. The nineteenth-century period piece, about a shy and clumsy pianist (voiced by Johnny Depp) who accidentally becomes engaged to a dead woman (Helena Bonham Carter) longing for love, is darkly designed in script and in production, and thoroughly intriguing. After the Corpse Bride drags the pianist to the spectacularly colorful Land of the Dead, the remainder of the film, about his escape from the underworld, is both poignant and exciting. A gothic comedy about Victorian repression may not be the most welcoming of kids' fare, but there's a verve and effervescence to the movie that makes it seem like a musical version of an Edgar Allan Poe story, and Danny Elfman's fanciful score is a blast. Co-directed by Mike Johnson.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

TWO FOR THE MONEY
There is little to hang on to in this sports-gambling drama directed by D. J. Caruso, which stars Matthew McConaughey as Brandon, a spent athlete who can pick the winners; Al Pacino as the king sports-score consultant who lures Brandon from Vegas to New York; and Rene Russo as Pacino's sexy, earnest, put-together wife with a past. McConaughey and Russo give fine, if inoffensive, performances, and Pacino reins in his manic tendencies and at times looks so tired that he seems completely authentic. Things pick up when Brandon demands his piece of the action, but the film fails to generate any emotional response to the heavy father-figure plot. Following a barrage of psychological explanation for the pathological pleasure of betting comes the punch line: as much as the characters try to apply skill to their work, they might as well flip a coin.—*Shauna Lyon* (In wide release.)

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY
Stanley Kubrick's slow, precise yet dreamy sci-fi epic. The ponderous, blurry appeal of the picture may be in its mystical vision of a graceful world of space, controlled by superior godlike minds, where the hero (Keir Dullea) is reborn as an angelic baby. It says that man is just a tiny nothing on the stairway to paradise; something better (i.e., nonhuman) is coming, and it's all out of your hands anyway. Kubrick's story line—which accounts for evolution by an extraterrestrial intelligence—is probably the most gloriously redundant plot of all time. The sulky, peevish voice of Hal, the computer—the only amusing character, he suggests a rejected homosexual lover—was supplied by Douglas Rain. The script is by Kubrick and Arthur C. Clarke.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of the Moving Image; Oct. 21-23.)

WALLACE & GROMIT: THE CURSE OF THE WERE-RABBIT
After their triumphant appearances in short films such as "The Wrong Trousers," Wallace and Gromit—respectively, a pale plasticine man and his clever plasticine dog, created by the British animator Nick Park—have at last been honored with a full-length film of their own. The result has been described as a vegetarian horror movie, not something you see every day. The agelessly English town where our heroes live falls prey to a giant rabbit, which plows through the carrots and lettuces that are lovingly cultivated by the populace. The hunt for the pest accelerates toward the kind of climactic chase that Park fans—not far removed from the thrill-tipsy audiences who crowded into early silent comedies—have come to expect. If anything, the new film is slightly too frantic for its own good, affording Wallace and his long-suffering mutt precious little opportunity to hang out in their enviable home. But the strange blend of the domestic and the futuristic pioneered by Park remains intact, and devotees will be relieved to see, as always, the thumb marks in the plasticine; these figures have their own complete existence, yet they were wrought by human hand. With voices by Peter Sallis, Ralph Fiennes, and Helena Bonham Carter.—*A.L.* (10/17/05) (In wide release.)

WHERE THE TRUTH LIES
A hard-breathing young journalist (Alison Lohman) pokes into the mysterious breakup, years ago, of a night-club performing team—the irrepressible Lanny Morris (Kevin Bacon) and the rather severe Vince Collins (Colin Firth). Atom Egoyan's new erotic drama, based on a Rupert Holmes novel, manages to be convoluted and sordid at the same time, and Bacon and Firth never really click. There's much disrobing and drunken carrying on in hotel suites, but the secret that the men have been harboring turns out to be rather tired. Who ever thought the dirty truth could be this unexciting?—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

Also Playing

DOMINO: In wide release. **THE FOG:** In wide release. **THE GOSPEL:** In wide release. **HENRI LANGLOIS: PHANTOM OF THE CINEMATHEQUE:** Film Forum. **LORD OF WAR:** In wide release (9/26/05). **NINE LIVES:** Angelika Film Center and Paris.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

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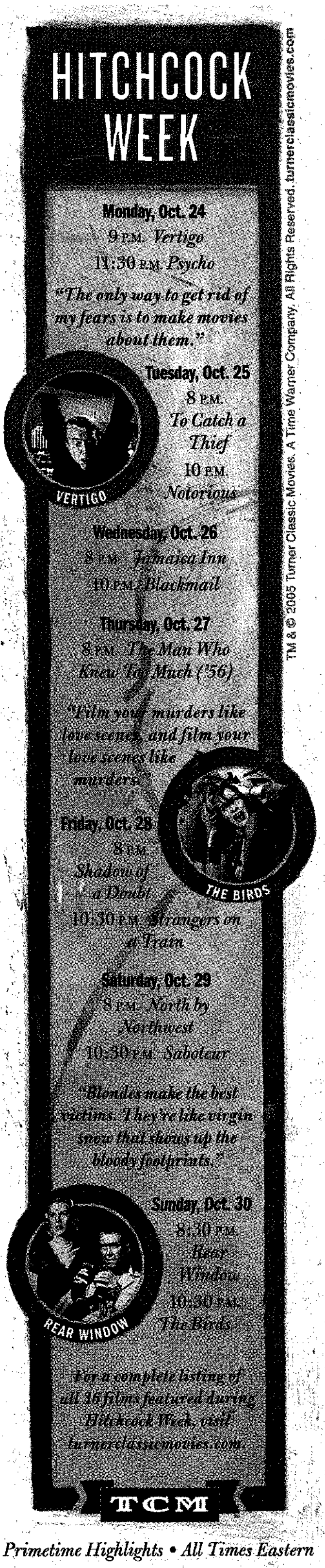

HITCHCOCK WEEK

Monday, Oct. 24
9 P.M. *Vertigo*
11:30 P.M. *Psycho*

"The only way to get rid of my fears is to make movies about them."

Tuesday, Oct. 25
8 P.M. *To Catch a Thief*
10 P.M. *Notorious*

Wednesday, Oct. 26
8 P.M. *Jamaica Inn*
10 P.M. *Blackmail*

Thursday, Oct. 27
8 P.M. *The Man Who Knew Too Much ('56)*

"Film your murders like love scenes, and film your love scenes like murders."

Friday, Oct. 28
8 P.M. *Shadow of a Doubt*
10:30 P.M. *Strangers on a Train*

Saturday, Oct. 29
8 P.M. *North by Northwest*
10:30 P.M. *Saboteur*

"Blondes make the best victims. They're like virgin snow that shows up the bloody footprints."

Sunday, Oct. 30
8:30 P.M. *Rear Window*
10:30 P.M. *The Birds*

For a complete listing of all 36 films featured during Hitchcock Week, visit turnerclassicmovies.com.

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Primetime Highlights • All Times Eastern

Skeleton of Cadavra" (2001, Larry Blamire). ♦ New York theatrical première. Oct. 21-25 at 7:30 and 9:30: "The Time We Killed" (2005, Jennifer Todd Reeves). ♦ Oct. 22 at 5:30: Short films by Jennifer Todd Reeves (1995-2003). ♦ Oct. 23 at 5:30: Short films by Jennifer Todd Reeves (1988-2001).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"Cinema Tropical." Oct. 19 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Ana y los Otros" (2002, Celina Murga; in Spanish). ♦ Pordenone Silent Film Festival. All films are silent. Oct. 20 at 7: "Baby Peggy Program" (1924). ♦ Oct. 21 at 7:30: "Treasures from a Chest," a program of short films. ♦ Oct. 22 at 3: A program of films starring Lillian Gish (1915). ♦ Oct. 22 at 5:30: "Underground" (1928, Anthony Asquith). ♦ Oct. 22 at 8: "The Triumph of the Rat" (1926, Graham Cutts). ♦ Oct. 23 at 3: "A Cottage on Dartmoor" (1930, Asquith). ♦ "Isabelle Huppert Selects." Oct. 23 at 5:30, with an introduction by Huppert, and at 9: "Wanda" (1971, Barbara Loden). ♦ "BAMcinématek Favorites." Oct. 24 at 7: "Viva Baseball!" (2005, Dan Klores). ♦ Special screening. Oct. 24 at 4:30 and 9:30 and Oct. 25 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Sound of Brazil" (2002, Mika Kaurismäki; in English and Portuguese).

CINEMA VILLAGE
22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363)—In revival. Oct. 19-20: "Harlan County, U.S.A." (1976, Barbara Kopple).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. Oct. 19-20 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: "Mouchette" (1967, Robert Bresson; in French). ♦ Oct. 19-20 at 1:10, 3:15, 5:30, 7:35, and 9:40: "Masculine Feminine" (1966, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). ♦ Through Nov. 17: "Naruse: The Unknown Japanese Master," the films of Mikio Naruse. All films are in Japanese. Oct. 21-24 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "When a Woman Ascends the Stairs" (1960). ♦ Oct. 25 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 8:20, and 10:10: "Wife" (1953). ♦ Oct. 25 at 6:30: "Older Brother, Younger Sister" (1953).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Cinéma Tuesdays." Oct. 24 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Cold Cuts" (1979, Bertrand Blier; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Weekend Classics." Oct. 21-23 at noon: "Two English Girls" (1971, François Truffaut; in French and English). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." Oct. 21-22: "A Hard Day's Night" (1964, Richard Lester). ♦ "Stranger Than Fiction," a documentary series. Oct. 25 at 7:30: "Ten Commandments: Tyler's Chance" (2005, David Van Taylor and Amanda McBaine).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through Nov. 23: The films of Isabelle Huppert. All films are in French. Oct. 19 at 6: "Gabrielle" (2005, Patrice Chéreau). ♦ Oct. 19 at 8:15 and Oct. 22 at 2: "The Lacemaker" (1977, Claude Goretta). ♦ Oct. 20 at 6 and Oct. 23 at 1:30: "Loulou" (1980, Maurice Pialat). ♦ Oct. 20 at 8:30 and Oct. 22 at 4:15: "Entre Nous" (1983, Diane Kurys). ♦ Oct. 21 at 6 and Oct. 24 at 7:45: "The King's Daughters" (2000, Patricia Mazuy). ♦ Oct. 21 at 8:30, Oct. 22 at 6:45, and Oct. 23 at 5:45: "Every Man for Himself" (1980, Jean-Luc Godard). ♦ Oct. 22 at 8:45: "The Ceremony" (1995, Claude Chabrol). ♦ Oct. 23 at 3:45: "La Vie Promise" (2002, Olivier Dahan). ♦ Oct. 24 at 6: "The Separation" (1994, Christian Vincent). ♦ "Stepin Fetchit: The Life and Times of Lincoln Perry." Oct. 19 at 6 and Oct. 20 at 8:15: "Judge Priest" (1934, John Ford). ♦ Oct. 19 at 8:30 and Oct. 20 at 6: "Miracle in Harlem" (1948, Jack Kemp). ♦ "Early Autumn: Masterworks of Japanese Cinema from the National Film Center, Tokyo." Oct. 21 at 6: "The Life and Opinions of Masseur Ichi" (1962, Kenji Misumi; in Japanese). ♦ "Rebels with a Cause: The Cinema of East Germany." All films are in German. Oct. 21 at 8: "Mother" (1958, Manfred Wekwerth and Harry Bremer). ♦ Oct. 22 at 2: "Your Unknown Brother" (1982, Ulrich Weiss). ♦ Oct. 22 at 8:45: "The Rabbit Is Me" (1965, Kurt Maetzig). ♦ Oct. 23 at 1:30: "The Legend of Paul and Paula" (1973, Heiner Carow). ♦ Oct. 23 at 3:45: "Carbide and Sorrel" (1963, Frank Beyer). ♦ Oct. 23 at 5:45: "Berlin—Schönhauser Corner" (1957, Gerhard Klein). ♦ Through Nov. 14: "Reviewed: Michael Snow." Oct. 22 at 6:30: "Corpus Callosum" (2002, Michael Snow). ♦ "Jerome: Hill and Foundation." Oct. 24 at 5:30: "These Are Not My Images" (2000, Irit Batsry). ♦ Oct. 24 at 7:15: "Film Portrait" (1972, Jerome Hill).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Repertory nights. Oct. 21-22 at 7:30 and Oct. 23 at 6:30: "2001: A Space Odyssey" (†). ♦ "Some Like It Wilder: The Complete Billy Wilder." Oct. 22 at 2: "The Emperor Waltz" (1948). ♦ Oct. 22-23 at 4: "One, Two, Three" (1961). ♦ Oct. 23 at 2: "Five Graves to Cairo" (1943).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. Oct. 21-22: "Cremaster 3" (2002, Matthew Barney).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"Children in the 20th Century." Oct. 23 at 4 and Oct. 25 at 6 (double feature): "The Boys of St. Vincent" (†) and "The Boys of St. Vincent: 15 Years Later" (†).

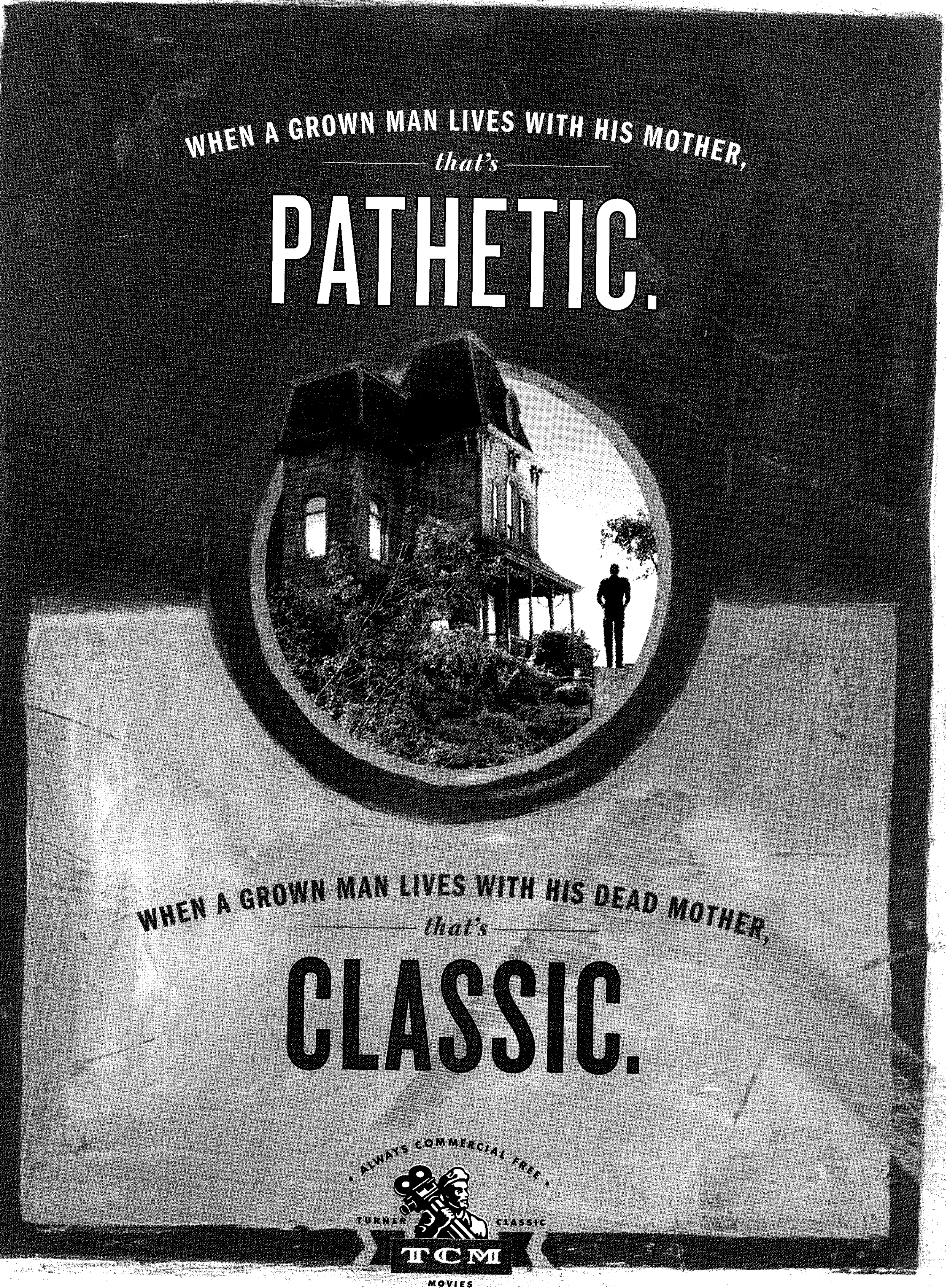
WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—"The Beauty of the Everyday: Japan's Shochiku Company at 110." All films are in Japanese. Oct. 19 at 1: "Face" (2000, Junji Sakamoto). ♦ Oct. 19 at 3:20: "The Castle of Sand" (1974, Yoshitaro Nomura). ♦ Oct. 19 at 9 and Oct. 20 at 1 and 5: "Café Lumiere" (2003, Hou Hsiao-hsien). ♦ Oct. 20 at 3: "Violent Cop" (1989, Takeshi Kitano). ♦ Special screening. Oct. 19 at 6:30: "Protocols of Zion" (2005, Marc Levin). ♦ "Young Friends of Film Presents." Oct. 20 at 7:30: "Ariel" (1988, Aki Kaurismäki; in Finnish). ♦ Through Nov. 10: "A Centenary of Chinese Cinema." All films are in Mandarin, except where noted. Oct. 21 at 7: "Goddess" (1934, Wu Yonggang; silent). ♦ Oct. 22 at 5 and Oct. 24 at 1: "Spring Silkworms" (1933, Cheng Bugao; silent). ♦ Oct. 22 at 7: "Yellow Earth" (1984, Chen Kaige). ♦ Oct. 22 at 9: "Springtime in a Small Town" (2002, Tian Zhuangzhuang). ♦ Oct. 23 and Oct. 25 at 2: "Platform" (2000, Jia Zhangke). ♦ Oct. 23 at 3 and 7: "The Big Road" (1934, Sun Yu; silent). ♦ Oct. 23 at 5:30 and Oct. 24 at 3: "Five Golden Flowers" (1959, Wang Jiayi). ♦ Oct. 23 at 7:30: "A Pearl Necklace" (1925, Li Zeyuan; silent). ♦ Oct. 24 at 5: "Twin Sisters" (1934, Zheng Zhengqiu). ♦ Oct. 24 at 7: "The Peach Girl" (1931, Bu Wancang). ♦ Oct. 24 at 9: "A Spray of Plum Blossoms" (1931, Wancang).

READINGS AND TALKS

"IRAQ CONFIDENTIAL"
Scott Ritter, a former U.N. arms inspector and the author of the forthcoming exposé "Iraq Confidential: The Untold Story of the Intelligence Conspiracy to Undermine the UN and Overthrow Saddam Hussein," talks with the *New Yorker* writer Seymour Hersh. (The New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St., at Central Park W. For more information, call 212-209-5400. Oct. 19 at 7.)

JOAN DIDION
The essayist and novelist reads from "The Year of Magical Thinking," her newly published memoir about the period following the death of her husband, John Gregory Dunne, and the repeated hospitalization of their daughter, Quintana Roo Dunne. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Oct. 19 at 8.)

"BEER SCHOOL BASH!"
Steve Hindi, a former journalist, and Tom Potter, an ex-banker, read from "Beer School," their account of starting and running the Brooklyn Brewery. Free beer will be served. (BookCourt, 163 Court St., Brooklyn. 718-875-3677. Oct. 20 at 7.)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ERIC KONIGSBERG
Konigsberg, a writer for this magazine, reads from his new book, "Blood Relation," a memoir about his great-uncle Heshy (Kayo) Konigsberg, a Mob hit man who spent some four decades in prison. (Barnes & Noble, Sixth Ave. at 21st St. No tickets necessary. Oct. 20 at 7.)

POETRY SOCIETY OF AMERICA
The Society, in conjunction with the Graduate Writing Program at the New School, honors the University of California Press. Fanny Howe, Mark Levine, Harryette Mullen, and Brian Blanchfield will read from their work; Pierre Joris and Jerome Rothenberg will offer selections from Paul Celan, André Breton, and others. (The New School, 66 W. 12th St. For more information, call 212-254-9628. Oct. 20 at 7:30.)

"THE BOOK THAT CHANGED MY LIFE"
This twelve-hour marathon features a wide variety of readers, including the food writer Mark Bittman, the sculptor Tom Otterness, the composer Ned Rorem, and the actors John Lithgow, Cynthia Nixon, and Kate Burton. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Oct. 22, starting at 11 A.M.)

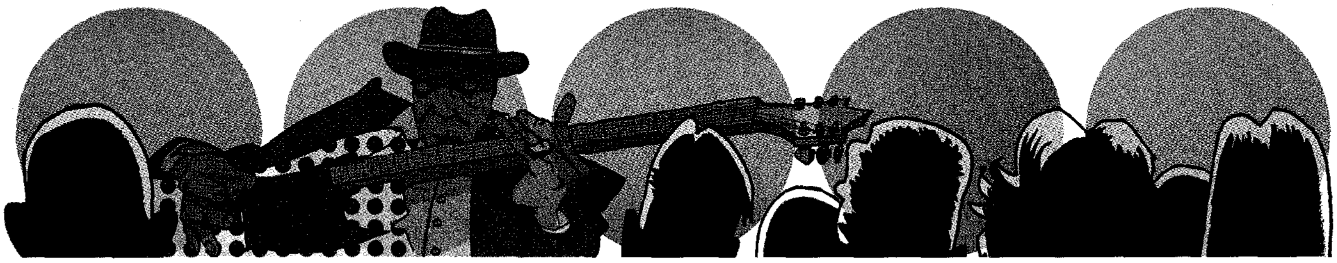
ABOVE AND BEYOND

AMUSING MUSICALS
The whimsical *New Yorker* artist Maira Kalman recently illustrated an edition of "The Elements of Style," the classic manual of clear usage by William Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White. A celebration at the New York Public Library for the book's release gives new meaning to its advice about using the active voice: the soprano Abby Fischer and the tenor Matt Hensrud will sing a musical adaptation of the work, composed by Nico Muhly, in the north hall of the library's reading room. (Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 212-868-4444. Oct. 19 at 7:30.) ♦ The Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art, which is celebrating its fourth anniversary, presents a revue of Broadway songs inspired by the funny pages. Members of the Ergo Theatre Company will perform selections from "Li'l Abner," "It's a Bird . . . It's a Plane . . . It's Superman," "Doonesbury," "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown," and other shows. (Tonic, 107 Norfolk St. For more information, call 212-501-4780, or visit www.moccany.org. Oct. 24 at 7.)

"BE PART OF YOUR PARK"
The Central Park Conservancy, the private, not-for-profit organization whose management of Manhattan's back yard has given it a near-country-club appearance, celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary with a day of discount memberships. For a dollar (the money collected will benefit the New Orleans City Park, which was damaged by Hurricane Katrina) participants can join for a day and enjoy tours of the Park, a scavenger hunt, rock climbing, and many other activities. (For a complete schedule, visit www.centralparknyc.org. Oct. 22, from 10 to 4.)

"ELECTRIC HALO"
This program, at a Brooklyn bathhouse turned theatre, explores the energy that surrounds us all, known to the Chinese as chi and the Indians as prana. It features screenings of "Arisman: Facing the Audience," a documentary by Tony Silver (the director of the 1983 graffiti chronicle "Style Wars") about the artist Marshall Arisman, a painter and visionary who depicts auras surrounding his subjects, be they people, monkeys, cats, or buffalo. Arisman, who claims to have the ability to see the human energy field as visible light, will then give a multimedia lecture entitled "The Aura in Art and Music." The avant-rock ensemble the Citizens closes the night with a musical performance. (Brooklyn Lyceum, 227 Fourth Ave., at President St., Park Slope. 718-857-4816. Oct. 22, starting at 6.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Sotheby's sale of English furniture and decorations on Oct. 21 will satisfy those who need just the right George III inlaid console table, while others may prefer to fawn over the star lot of the French furniture sale on the following day, a Louis XV rolltop desk that may have belonged to Marie Antoinette. Peasant girls, exotic beauties, and elegant society ladies (like the subject of Boldoni's "Portrait of a Lady," depicted with her beloved Pekingese) are among the fauna to be found in a sale of nineteenth-century European art on Oct. 25. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Christie's** sale of jewelry on Oct. 19 features not only an array of powerhouse diamonds but also an Art Deco miniature replica of a Steinway Model D by Cartier, which, when middle C is touched, reveals rows of cigarettes; a tiny piano chair, concealing a lighter, is conveniently included. On Oct. 25, two grand pianos that one can actually play (one decorated with Art Nouveau foliage and nymphs) will appear in a sale of nineteenth-century furniture and decorations. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ The art of the benefit auction as social happening will be on display at the "Take Home a Nude" event at **Phillips** on Oct. 20; the sale, preceded by cocktails—including the signature Pink Nudie—and a sexy number by the retro-burlesque performer Dita Von Teese, benefits the New York Academy of Art, a school co-founded by Andy Warhol. (450 W. 15th St. 212-966-0300, ext. 975.)



JASHAR AWAN

ON THE HORIZON

CLASSICAL MUSIC
TOP VOICES
Nov. 9

Deborah Voigt and Ben Heppner, two singers of power and grace, perform, along with the conductor Asher Fisch and the Orchestra of St. Luke's, an evening of arias and duets by Beethoven, Weber, and Wagner. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500.)

ART
"FREQUENCY"
Nov. 9–March 12

Thelma Golden curated an energetic review of twenty-eight emerging African-American artists at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 2001 and called it "Freestyle." She and Christine Y. Kim have now organized another show along the same lines; this one features thirty-four participants. (212-864-4500.)

THE THEATRE
BOSTON IRISH
Nov. 11

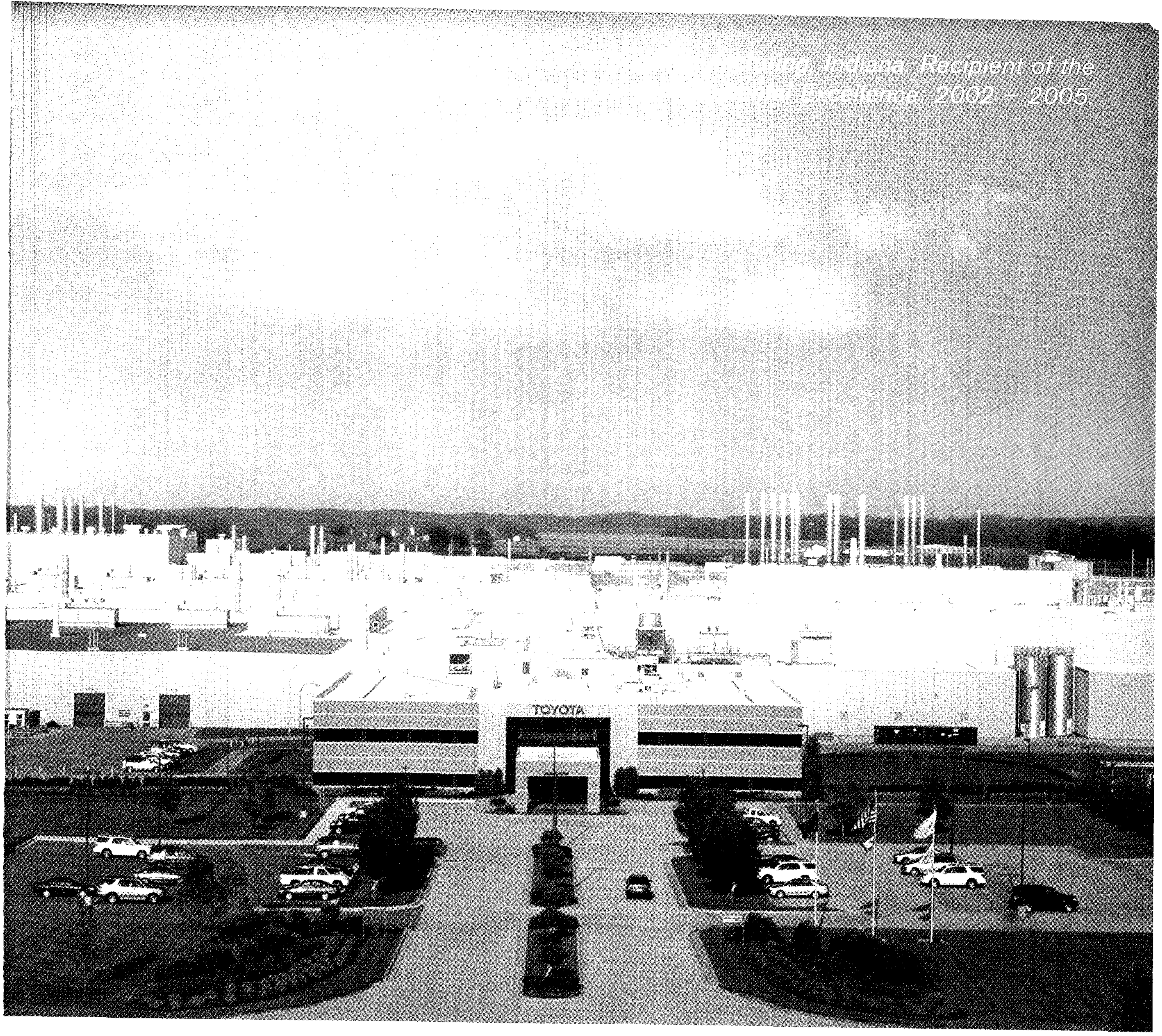
Gabriel Byrne will star in Eugene O'Neill's play "A Touch of the Poet," about an Irishman who arrives in Boston in 1828 masquerading as a gentleman and maintains the ruse until his daughter falls in love with a wealthy American. The Tony Award winner Doug Hughes directs. (212-719-1300.)

NIGHT LIFE
"WALL STREET RISING"
Nov. 14–20

A new free concert series at the Tribeca Performing Arts Center includes an appearance on Nov. 15 by the sexagenarian blues guitarist Buddy Guy, whose turbocharged playing influenced Jimi Hendrix, among others. Guy's latest album, "Bring 'Em In," features guest spots by such younger musicians as John Mayer, Anthony Hamilton, and Robert Randolph. The series also includes Ryan Adams, on Nov. 18, and Aimee Mann, on Nov. 20. (212-509-0300.)

DANCE
RENNIE HARRIS
Nov. 19

Harris's group Puremovement combines hip-hop poetry and movement with traditional African dance, but Harris is also a spectacular soloist, who will perform, at Aaron Davis Hall, a new autobiographical work, "PrinceScareKrow's Road to the Emerald City." (212-650-7100.)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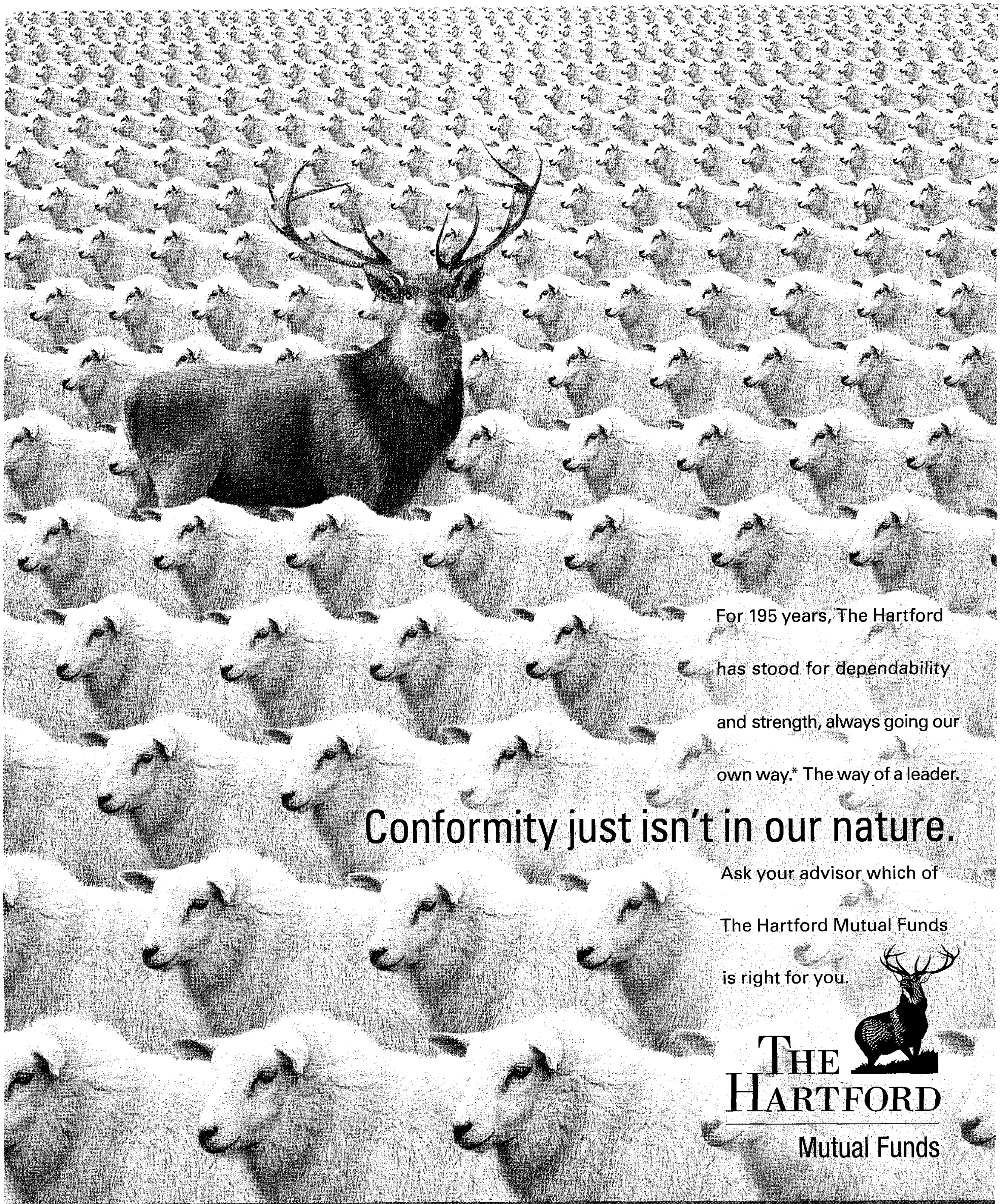
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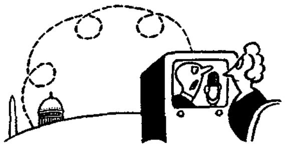
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
GAME PLAN

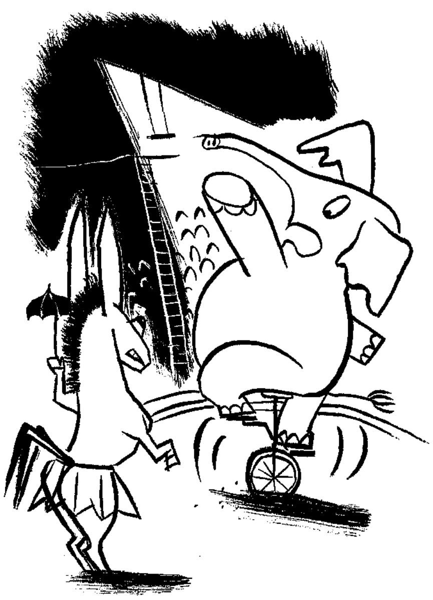


Nine months ago, Inauguration Day in Washington had all the trappings of a coronation. Karl Rove, the President's blandly smiling Richelieu, told gatherings of partisans that George W. Bush's three-per-cent margin of victory was a mandate for the consolidation of Republican power; at bars throughout the capital, young conservatives raised toasts to years of political domination. With its majority in both Houses of Congress expanded by yet another crop of radical freshmen, the ruling party appeared poised to achieve the last remaining items on its agenda and consign the opposition to oblivion. It was hard to believe that the Democrats would ever win another election.

The Republican implosion has come with startling speed. In the normally disciplined ranks of Republican opinion-makers, Harriet Miers is reviled as a mediocrity and a squandered chance to move the Supreme Court firmly to the right for the next few decades; those Inauguration Night revellers are now tearing her and one another apart on right-wing Web sites. The conservatives' other grand objectives, in economic and foreign policy, have also failed this year: the President's attempt to privatize Social Security went nowhere, and the "Bush doctrine" has been so damaged in Iraq that even the American Enterprise Institute, where the idea of invading Iraq was incubated, just held a funereal conference on the war.

These policy failures coincide with a rash of legal trouble: the congressional enforcer Tom DeLay has been indicted for political money-laundering; a White House procurement official has been arrested in connection with the Jack Abramoff lobbying scandal; and, as the grand-jury investigation into the Valerie Plame leak nears its end, America awaits the fate of Karl Rove. All of this, together with the cronyism and incompetence exposed by the Administration's handling of Hurricane Katrina, has destroyed the image of a ruthlessly unified party led by a President who always wins.

It was an image that inspired fear in the opposition and in Republicans who were tempted to stray. But uncontested power hollowed out the Bush White House and the Republican Party: ideology became cant, and political triumphs supplanted real achievements. The unravelling has been all the more dramatic considering the Republicans' total control of Washington. Since August, Bush's political standing has collapsed faster than Lyndon Johnson's in 1965, when the Democrats ruled the capital and the Watts riots and the escalation in Vietnam set off the decline of modern liberalism. The following year, Republicans made large gains in the midterm congressional elections, Ronald Reagan was elected governor of California, and the conservative movement began its ascent.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Part of the movement's success came from its ability to pursue common goals in spite of divisions—between pro-business libertarians and social conservatives, tax cutters and deficit hawks, intellectuals and evangelicals, millionaires and the white working class. But Bush's philosophy of corporate conservatism—more Harding than Reagan; not anti-government, just anti-good-government, with a tone of authoritarian piety and legislation written by lobbyists—has shown that Republican unity was always based less on intellectual coherence than on a willingness to keep one's mouth shut.

Yet the Republicans did once present the country with a strong collective vision, most notably in 1994, when they came to power swearing to enact a document called the Contract with America. Few remember anymore what those Republicans signed: vows to reform Congress, along with commitments to fiscal responsibility and personal accountability. Noble goals! By the standards of the DeLay Congress, the Gingrich revolutionaries were idealistic and rational.

But the soiled and forgotten contract suggests a way for the Democrats to seize their own rare chance in the 2006 elections. The Party will not return to power by waiting for indictments or by fine-tuning tired slogans. Nor will it be useful to copy the Republican right's strategy of pandering to its constituency: the conservative base is larger than that of the liberals, as we learned in last year's Presidential election. The old debate over moving to the extreme or to the center, which resurfaces after every defeat, presents a false choice and is itself a sign of a political vegetative state. The sure way for the Democrats to go on losing is to frame a message designed to win back married Catholic women while mobilizing twenty-something iPod users.

Instead of trying to cobble together a hypothetical majority with a hodgepodge of small-bore policy proposals, the Democrats need to nationalize the elections of 2006 the way the Republicans did in 1994. A Democratic manifesto that unites the Party's own diverse factions would begin as a referendum on the ruling party: the White House and Congress have handed government over to corrupt interests, and, in so doing, the Republicans have betrayed basic American principles of honesty, competence, and fairness. There is no reason for Democrats to be on the defensive about moral values. On issue after issue, government by cronyism and corruption has sacrificed the interests of the middle class to those of the Administration's wealthy friends. The deepening inequality in American life threatens families and democracy, and it is neither natural nor inevitable.

As a new book, "Off Center," by Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, points out, Republicans never won the war of ideas—Americans remain almost implacably centrist—but they created a powerful political machine that is tactically shrewder and far richer than that of the Democrats. To overcome these structural disadvantages, the Democrats' campaign approach needs to be broad and bold. Energy: The Republicans have made America more dependent on foreign oil while gas prices are skyrocketing; the Democrats will push for energy independence. Health care: The Republicans have allowed private companies to eliminate choice while costs go up and millions of Americans lack insurance; the Democrats will enact national coverage that restores choice and holds down costs. Taxes: The Republicans have shifted the burden from the top to the middle; the Democrats will reverse that trend, and will end the Administration's ruinous fiscal policies. National security: Republican incompetence has squandered our power abroad and failed to make us more secure at home, as the country learned after Katrina; the Democrats will rebuild the armed forces—making it at least possible for the Iraq insurgency to be defeated—and bring competence to homeland security.

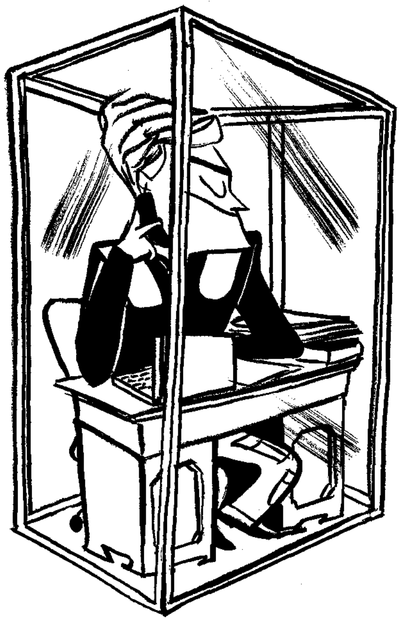
Above all, the Democratic Party needs to overcome its own self-esteem problem. Its leaders have to show imagination and take risks, to be confident and aggressive, to proceed as if the current occupant of the White House no longer mattered—as if the Democrats fully intended to win and govern. The Democratic Party has to speak for the common good in a moral language; and it has to believe what it says, so that when the opposition's attacks come, as they will, it can find the heart and the courage to fight back.

—*George Packer*

NOSEBLEED DEPT.
RARE AIR

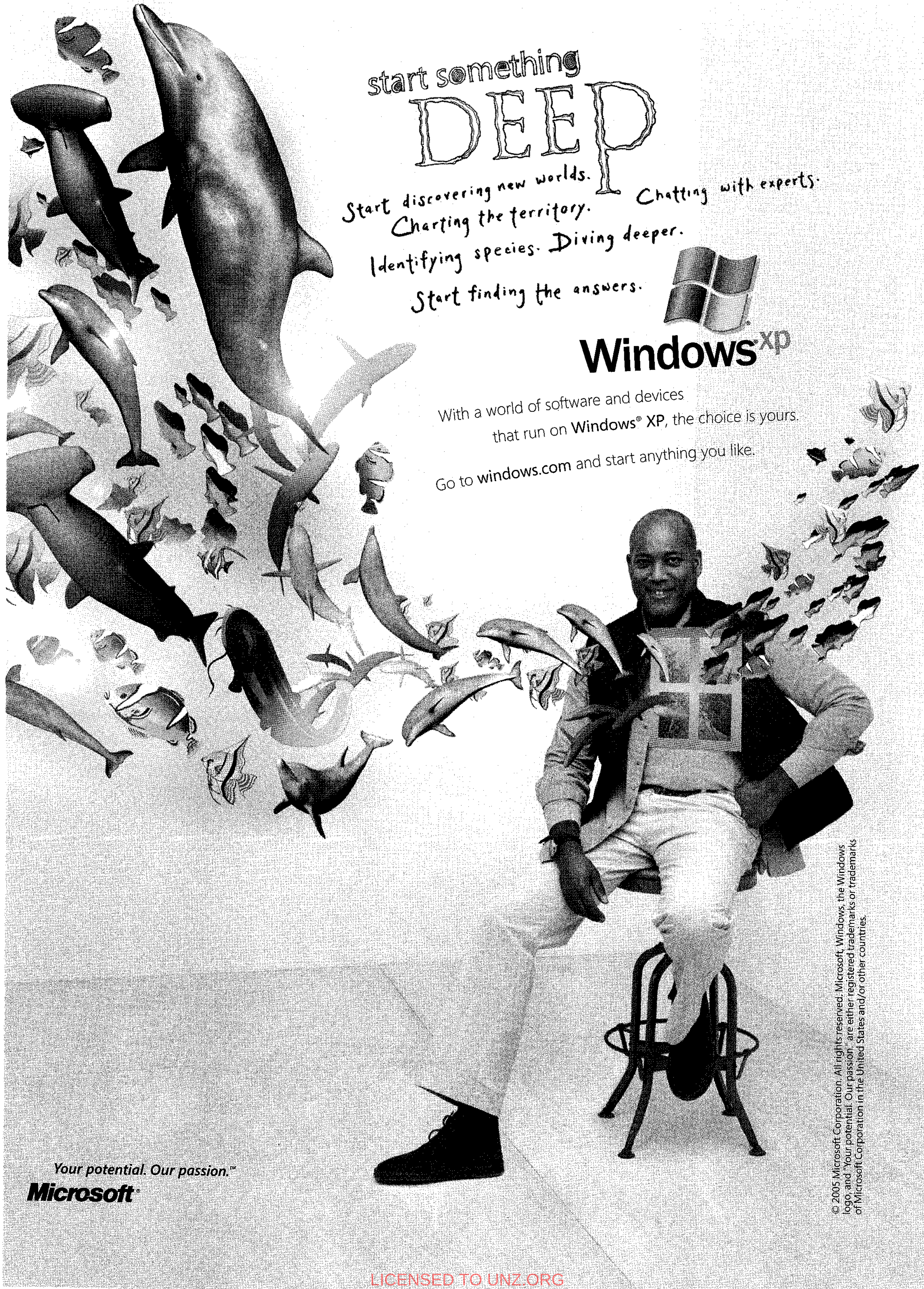
There isn't much a guy can do to improve his physical fitness while sitting all day at a desk, except maybe to squeeze a rubber ball, jiggle a leg, or eat a lot of bananas. This was the problem that confronted Richard Wiese, the president of the Explorers Club, as he planned an expedition to climb a pair of volcanoes in Mexico. His biggest obstacle would be the altitude (the volcanoes, Orizaba and Iztaccíhuatl, are, respectively, 18,700 and 17,343 feet above sea level), and the fact that he would have very little time to become acclimated to it. Even seasoned climbers need weeks to get used to the thin air. Wiese, experienced as a mountaineer but encumbered by a nine-to-five job, would have merely days.

His solution, the fruit of some Internet poking around, was to have an altitude chamber installed in his office, on the third floor of the club's headquarters, a Tudor-style mansion on the Upper East Side. The chamber, made by a company called Hypoxico, is a transparent plastic box, nine feet by six feet by seven feet—the size of a walk-in closet. Amid all the club's artifacts (Admiral Peary's sledge, Thor Heyerdahl's globe, Peter the Great's side table), the chamber seems out of place, like Pei's pyramid at the Louvre. The air inside simulates that which you would breathe high in the mountains: it contains less oxygen. A month before leaving for Mexico, Wiese moved his desk into the chamber and began conducting his daily business at the equivalent of thirteen thousand feet. This was, as far as he could tell, "the first instance of an altitude chamber being used in an office setting." (And it may not be the last: it's not hard to imagine oxygen, like carbohydrates and sleep, becoming a desirable deprivation among members of Manhattan's executive class.)



Hypoxic chamber

At first, the mountain air got to him. He couldn't stay in the chamber for more than a few hours at a time, and in telephone conversations with the club's board of directors (who took to calling him B.O.B., for Bubble Office Boy) he found himself growing irritable and woozy. But after a couple of weeks he began to adjust. Thirteen thousand feet felt like flatland.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On a recent afternoon, just prior to the Mexico trip, Wiese made room in his chamber for a sea-level visitor. Wiese is a youthful forty-six, tan and sandy-haired. He wore a Beretta shooting sweater and cargo pants. Once he closed the door, the percentage of oxygen in the air, as measured by a handheld monitor, began to drop, and along with it the amount of oxygen in the blood. A mild light-headedness set in. After a few minutes, the feeling was not unlike that of sitting atop the Grand Teton, if you were to factor out wind, cold, vistas, exhaustion, vertigo, and the problem of getting down.

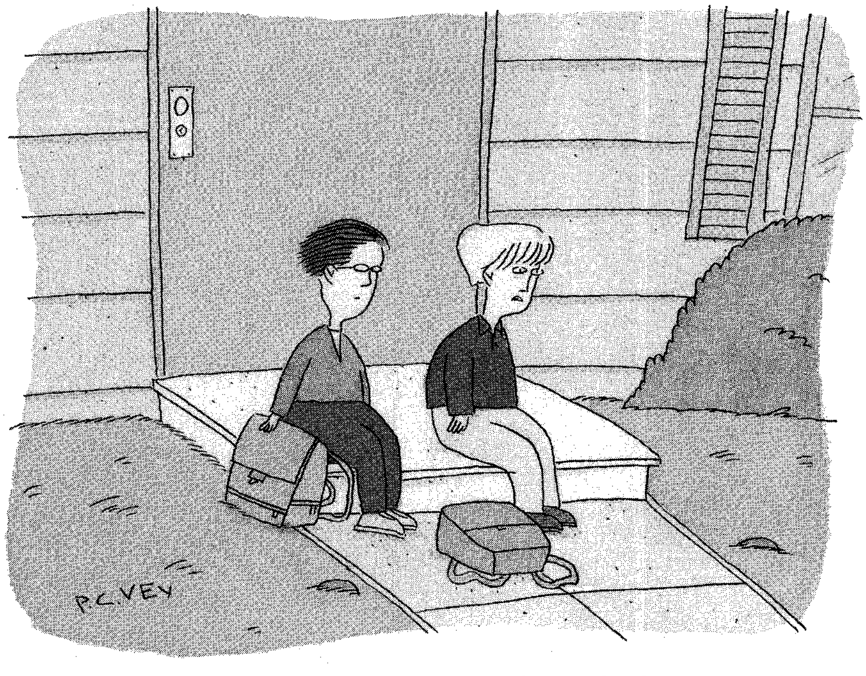
The chamber came equipped with a mask, which Wiese could strap over his mouth and nose. The air coming through the mask was even more hypoxic, like the air at twenty-one thousand feet. After issuing a few disclaimers, Wiese had the visitor strap on the mask. "It's going to be a horrible experience, and at some point you'll say, 'Take this off!' " he said. The mask went on, and within a minute the world grew heavy, the light pre-surgical. The pulse sped, as the blood's oxygen level dropped. "More of your cells are being killed than are being rejuvenated," Wiese explained. To mimic conditions inside a snowbound tent, Wiese and the visitor played a few hands of blackjack. "Look at you bobbing around," Wiese said. "Your eyes are looking a little buggy. Try standing up." This experiment did not go well. Nor did a brief one involving a step machine inside the chamber. Finally, the revelation that the visitor was feeling an unfamiliar tingling in the vicinity of his left femoral artery prompted an immediate removal of the mask.

A small group of people had been watching all this from outside the chamber. Back at sea level, introductions revealed that they were Gary Kotliar, a spiffy Russian of indeterminate age, who had founded Hypoxico, among other businesses; a press attaché named Jared Rice; and Kotliar's associate, a tall blond woman named Yulia Soukhanova, a former Miss U.S.S.R. Kotliar began enumerating the chamber's powers of rejuvenation. "Did you know it is used already for treating untreatable diseases?" he said. He mentioned a few. It can also, apparently, serve as both a sleep aid and an aphrodisiac. "You are like bull," he said. "I'm, like, nineteen years old! It is the equivalent of ten thousand oysters."

Wiese mentioned that a lot of climbers in the city work on Wall Street and are "cash-rich and time-poor," and wondered whether Kotliar might donate a hypoxic chamber to the Explorers Club, for members to use.

"Richard, Richard," Kotliar said. "That is a great idea."

—*Nick Paumgarten*



"My parents have decided to homeschool me, but they haven't decided which home."

WHO R U? HARRIET 4 JUSTICE

Last week in this space, readers learned about a feature on the official White House Web site titled Ask the White House, an "online interactive forum where you can submit questions to Administration officials and friends of the White House." On four occasions in 2004, in her dual capacity as an Administration official and F.O.T.W.H., Harriet Miers sat at a keyboard and fielded questions from the public. How, for instance, did President Bush manage to play horseshoes with his Scottish terrier, Barney? (Harriet Miers: "Metal horseshoes are too heavy for Barney to lift, so he doesn't carry them around.") Also:

> Karrin from OHIO writes: Where were you on September 11th and what did you do?
>
> Harriet Miers: Karrin, I was traveling with the President on September 11, 2001. So I started out in Florida. I was the President's Staff Secretary at that point in time...I was responsible for making sure the remarks he prepared to give to the Nation from Louisiana were properly prepared for him. It took some time, and the President saw me hurrying to give them to him. He said, "Good hustle!" *He made me feel good that I was* contributing. Typical.

It seems that after her elevation to White House Counsel, Miers was no longer eligible to participate in Ask the White House. And, of course, since her nomination to the Supreme Court she's been too busy (not to mention, evidently, under a gag order). Fortunately, however, a blogger who writes under the pen name "Harriet Miers" has also stayed busy, posting several times a day at a Web site called Harriet Miers's Blog!!! ("The blog of the #1 smartest President ever's #1 pick to be the next Associate Justice of the Supreme Court!") Like any blogger, "Harriet Miers" has good days and less good ones:

> So today I was just thinking . . . serve five or six years on the Bench . . . I could get promoted to Chief Justice . . . and then from there I could go ANYWHERE!! I can write my own ticket! . . . Also, today's my one-week anniversary of being a Supreme Court nominee! Happy anniversary to me!!

ABORTION
No, I never talked to the president about it . . . he's MARRIED, people!! There's no way there ever would've been a need, EVER . . . the rumors are a load of BS (Baloney Sandwich)!

JUST THOUGHT OF SOMETHING
Does anyone have any good recommendations of general books on Constitutional Law, history of the Supreme Court, etc.? THANX!!!

"Harriet Miers," whoever, wherever she (he?) is, declined a request for a telephone interview but did agree to have an Instant Messaging conversation (buddy name: dallasharriet44).

TALK OF THE TOWN: Let's do word associations: "Constitution"—what's the first thing that comes to mind?

DALLASHARRIET44: Of the United States!!! Bill of Rights, Founding Fathers. John Hancock, that's how it got its name!! . . . I've been cramming but it's hard to find time. . . . Can you bring notes to confirmation hearings?

TOTT: We read in the *Times* a story about your note to G.W.B. in 1997: "Hopefully Jenna and Barbara recognize that their parents are 'cool'—as do the rest of us." . . . What was that all about?

DALLASHARRIET44: George and Laura . . . well, basically they're really cool but their daughters don't know it!! I mean, they have figured it out since 2000, but back then they were Too Cool for School and way too cool for mom and dad. You know that age. If you think J&B are party animals, you should hear some of the stories about G&L . . . not from recently, of course.

TOTT: Not being judgmental or anything, just objective, the way all reporters should be, how would you be in a position to define or recognize "cool"?

DALLASHARRIET44: Well, you don't know all the sides of Miss Harriet Ellan Miers!!

TOTT: This appeared in a *Times* editorial: "Ms. Miers's record is so thin that no one seems to have any idea of what she believes, and she was clearly chosen because of her close ties to the President, not her legal qualifications." Care to comment?

DALLASHARRIET44: Well, did the New York *Times* pick me? Or did the President of the Entire Country, who DOES know all my qualifications?

TOTT: Last question. The *Times* reported: "White House officials said Mr. Bush formally offered Ms. Miers the job on Sunday night over a dinner of fried shrimp and polenta with Laura Bush at the White House. Scott McClellan, the press secretary, said . . . 'I don't think this was something that she expected.' " Is that true?

DALLASHARRIET44: Being Staff Secretary in the White House was an amazing experience. I thought that was going to be my High Light. So I guess I wasn't wearing a poker face at dinner . . . it was truly the biggest night of my life. . . . I didn't expect the polenta . . . and I REALLY didn't expect the Supreme Court Justice nomination!! I knew there would be shrimp tho. . . .

Do I get to see the story early? I PROMISE I won't blog it.

TOTT: In a word, no.

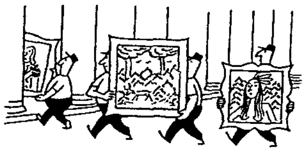
DALLASHARRIET44: O.K., then I won't tell you how I'm going to rule in cases that come before the Court.

TOTT: Bye, Harriet (a.k.a. Ms. Maybe-Our-Next-Female-SC-Justice!).

DALLASHARRIET44: Well, I have to say, New York gets a bum rap—you're a good ambassador! Unless you're "the exception that proves the rule." Thanks!!! Oh, one thing. TELL YOUR READERS CALL THEIR SENATORS TO SAY "VOTE FOR HARRIET!!" I forgot to say that before. O.K. good night.

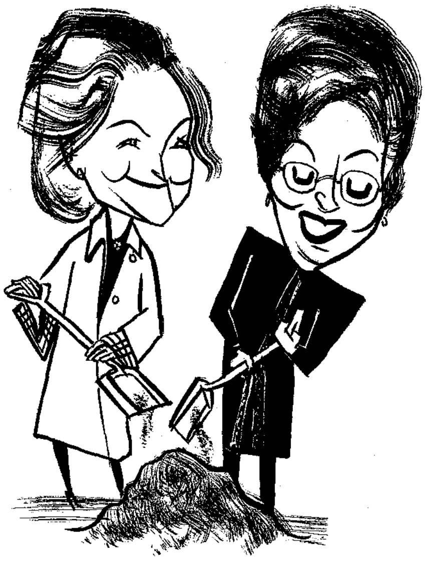
—*Mark Singer*

GOOD WORKS
BED BATH & BOWERY



Last Tuesday morning, the empty lot at 235 Bowery (the former site of Bowery Parking, LLC) looked, despite a vestigial chain-link fence, fit for a garden party. To protect guests from the rain, a tent had been erected; beneath it were rows of white, scallop-backed chairs. The occasion was a groundbreaking ceremony for the new headquarters of the New Museum of Contemporary Art. "I'm honored today to be joined by many of our most generous supporters," Saul Dennison, the president of the board of trustees, said in his opening remarks. "I'd like to take a moment to thank Mitzi and Warren Eisenberg, and Susan and Leonard Feinstein, who sit behind me." The two couples, the museum's principal benefactors, could be seen on either side of the dais.

"Which one is Mitzi, and which one is Susan?" a museum staffer, wearing a headset, whispered to a colleague.



Susan Feinstein and Mitzi Eisenberg

"Oh, my God. I'm going to do the same embarrassing thing. I can never remember."

Mitzi was the one on the left, a convivial grandmother with eyeglasses and short gray hair. She is an art collector from Short Hills, New Jersey. Susan, on the right, had a swingy silver bob and held her chin very high. She was wearing a cherry-red duster, with the cuffs turned out to reveal Burberry plaid. She is also an art collector, and lives on Long Island. Both women had nice nails and large diamond studs in their ears. A couple of years ago, they joined the museum's board.

In 1971, their husbands, who (along with Mitzi) grew up together in New Bedford, Massachusetts, started the housewares chain Bed Bath & Beyond. Warren was in charge of real estate and finance, and Leonard handled merchandising; the arrangement has stood up ever since. They and their families keep a low profile (although Liz Smith once noted that Mitzi, "a charming lady from New Jersey," had, at a charity auction, bid fifteen thousand dollars for a luncheon with Bette Midler) and like to travel and dine together; the men, the executors of each other's will, are known for wearing sweaters to the office. Earlier this year, the four friends made a joint gift, in the range of ten million dollars, to the New Museum's building campaign. The facility, which will be completed in 2007, is to be named in their honor.

Back on the stage, Saul Dennison finished his welcome. (Before him, Laurie Anderson had performed an original song, by sucking on a pillow speaker. "I get kind of a thrill out of putting electronics in my mouth," she said.) A Shinto priest in a robe and lacquered clogs approached the stage, chanting, "*Saishu kashikomi kashikomi mo mosaku kotabi New Museum of Contemporary Art-i.*" (The new building's architects are the Japanese avant-gardists Sejima + Nishizawa.) Susan, looking tickled, mouthed something to her husband. The priest blessed the construction site by sprinkling its four corners with little squares of salted paper. Then the four patrons took their turn shovelling dirt.

After the ceremony, the Feinsteins and the Eisenbergs gathered their umbrellas and raincoats; they were joining other donors for a Chinese banquet on Mott Street, and then going to look at art. Susan and Mitzi explained that although they had no special connection to the Lower East Side, they were thrilled to be there.

Susan: "We have apartments in the city, even though our main residences are in the suburbs."

Mitzi: "One thing we all talked about is that this museum has the potential to change the whole neighborhood."

She continued, "I was the first one to go on the museum's board. Then I got Susan on, and we thought it was so exciting what they were doing."

"And we got drunk and decided—" Warren said.

"Don't say that!" said Mitzi.

"They were doing very well, but they needed a push," Leonard said.

"Oh! We were in your kitchen," Susan said to Mitzi. "Remember?" She nudged her husband. "We were in their kitchen."

"Well, I know one thing," Leonard said. "You weren't cooking.

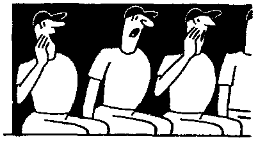
"We had all taken a trip to Marfa, Texas," he went on. "And when we came back that's when it started germinating."

"I thought we were out to dinner," Warren said. He added, "This is one of my proudest days."

"You have a white thing there," Susan said to Mitzi. She reached across to her friend's lapel and picked off a scrap of Shinto confetti.

—Lauren Collins

EVERYBODY'S AN EXPERT
DRAWING PITCHERS



Michael Witte, an illustrator, enjoys his work but finds that the artist's life can be lonely. So, a few years ago, to relieve the monotony of his days, he installed a twenty-seven-inch television in his attic studio overlooking the Hudson River in Nyack. He liked playing tapes of old baseball games, and found himself frequently pausing to watch the windups of Hall of Fame pitchers, frame by frame. "One of the things I discovered is that the mechanics of the greatest pitchers are consistent throughout the history of the game," he said the other day. During the course of his procrastinations, Witte became convinced that he had divined a very important secret: how to safely and dependably throw a ninety-five-mile-per-hour fastball.

Witte, who is sixty-one years old, with wispy graying hair, grew up near St. Louis, rooting for his home-town team. As it happened, some boyhood friends of his bought a stake in the Cardinals in the mid-nineties. Witte began attending spring-training games with one of them, Andrew Baur, occasionally dropping hints that he had made a revolutionary discovery. At first, he was a timid Galileo. One afternoon, Baur invited him on the field to watch Rick Ankiel warm up. "Is that beautiful or what?" Baur said. Witte kept quiet. "I didn't want to be a nasty guest," he said. "But internally I said, 'Or what.' I just knew he was never going to fulfill his promise." A few years post hoc, Ankiel lost the ability to throw a baseball within the same county as home plate. He is now an outfielder.

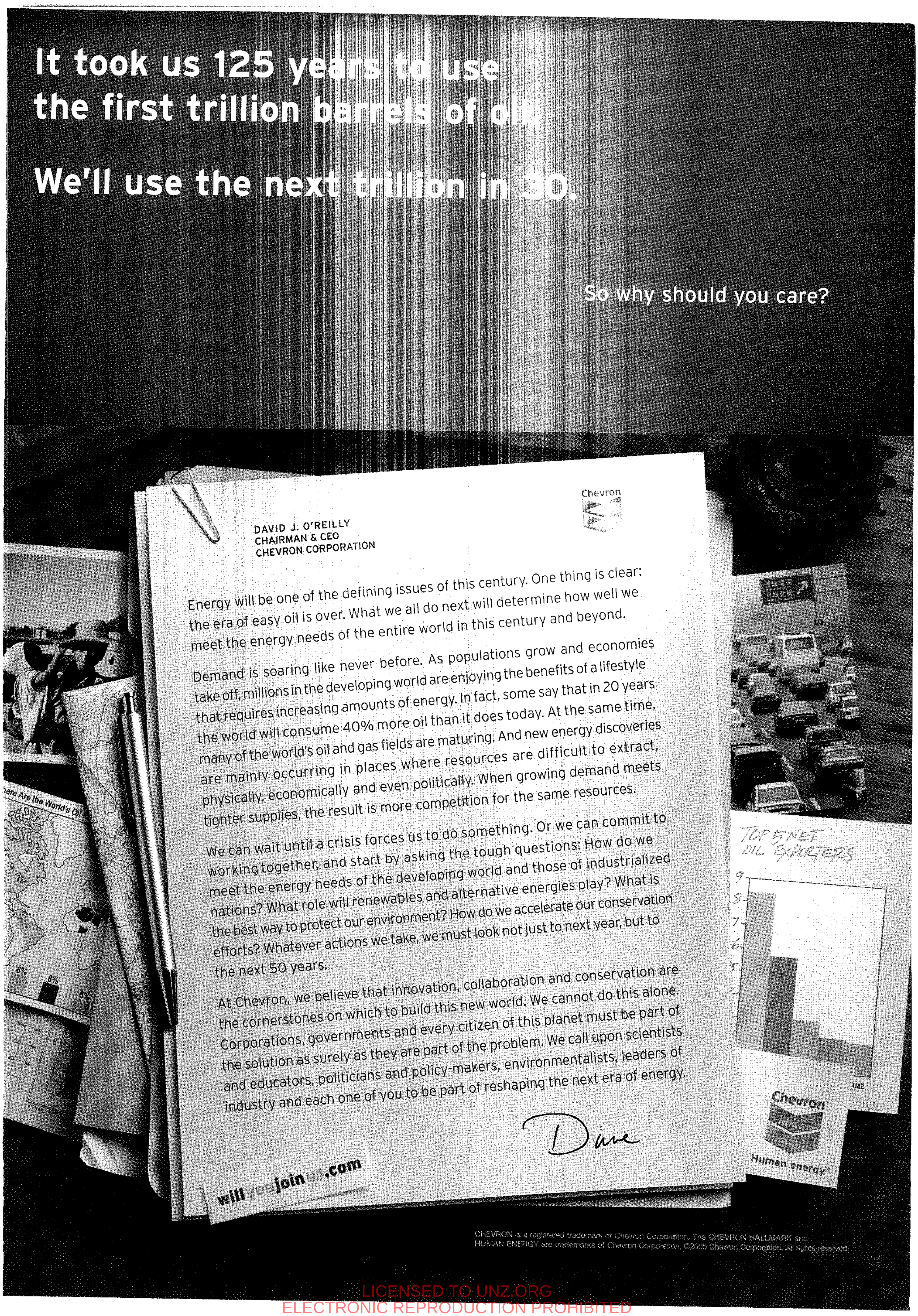
Gradually, Witte grew more confident about his theories, to the dismay of his wife, a psychologist, and his three sons. "My dad will happily teach anyone how to throw a round ball with optimal efficiency," said his son Spencer, who played second base for Temple. "If you sound interested, you basically just volunteered for an hour lesson." Unbidden, Witte began faxing elaborate diagrams of pitching mechanics to his pals in St. Louis. Either they were just being polite or they saw something potentially valuable, but they arranged for Witte to give a presentation on the mechanics of the Hall of Fame pitcher Bob Gibson to an audience that happened to include Bob Gibson. Witte recently learned that the night before the presentation Gibson told Baur, "If this guy is full of shit, I'm walking out." Gibson stayed. (Witte has not ventured to ask if this constituted an endorsement.) Witte said, "I was able to show him why he had been a great pitcher, which he never understood before then."

Witte's scientific theory, the specifics of which he refuses to divulge, has something to do with how successful pitchers keep their gloves elevated at the start of their windups, let their back shoulders drop, and lift their front legs high. Jeff Luhnow, the Cardinals' vice-president of player procurement, admits that Witte at first seemed to have "very little credibility," but he nevertheless put him on the payroll as a consultant.

In May, before the amateur draft, Luhnow sent Witte several DVDs of pitchers the Cardinals were considering. Witte found that several of the prospects had windups that deviated from his preferred trajectory, and so, in lengthy memos, written with a drawing pen, he advised the Cardinals to avoid them. A few days before the draft, two of these pitchers blew out their arms. "I think this helped me establish more authority," Witte said.

Luhnow also invited Witte to spring training to lecture the team's minor-league pitching coaches. He arrived in Jupiter, Florida, carrying three suitcases of video tapes with labels like "Drysdale!!!" and "Seaver!!!" and a large artist's sketch pad with a hand-drawn presentation which he called "Classic Mechanics: A Throwing Model Based on the Construction of the Motions of Great Historic Pitchers." Five pitching coaches, wearing their uniforms, sat down in a conference room. Did they look happy to be there? "Not exactly," Witte said. None of the coaches offered him any tips on his drawing style.

—Michael Rosenwald



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LIFE AND LETTERS

THE FIRST CONSERVATIVE

How Peter Viereck inspired—and lost—a movement.

BY TOM REISS

In the winter of 1940, *The Atlantic Monthly* invited Peter Viereck, a twenty-three-year-old Harvard graduate who had won the college's top essay and poetry prizes, to write about "the meaning of young liberalism for the present age." Viereck responded with a five-thousand-word manifesto entitled "But I'm a Conservative . . . ," which appeared in the magazine's April issue.

"Why should any young man want to be a conservative, on a globe where so much needs changing?" Viereck began. His defensiveness was understandable. Conservatism as a formal political doctrine didn't exist in America in 1940. The word "conservative" was associated primarily with fringe groups—anti-industrial Southern agrarians and the anti-New Deal tycoons who led the Liberty League. Even arch-isolationists, such as former President Herbert Hoover and Senator Robert Taft, of Ohio—two of the most right-wing figures in the Republican Party—insisted on being called liberal. "In the United States at this time, liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition," Lionel Trilling observed in 1950, in the preface of his book "The Liberal Imagination." "There are no conservative or reactionary ideas in general circulation."

Viereck's essay was deliberately provocative—"I have watched the convention of revolt harden into dogmatic ritual," he wrote of the Marxists who he said presided over campus life—but it also contained a sincere entreaty. Published as the Nazi armies were invading Denmark and Norway, it called for a "new conservatism" to combat the "storm of totalitarianism" abroad as well as moral relativism and soulless materialism at home. Nazism and Communism were fundamentally utopian, Viereck argued, sanctioning the murder of any person or group perceived to be an obstacle to a perfect society, and because liberalism suffered from a milder version of the same flaw—a naïve belief in progress and humanity's essential goodness—it was an inadequate defense against foreign tyranny.

"Political anti-Semitism is no isolated program," he warned. "It is the first step in an ever-widening revolt of mob instinct against all restraints and liberties. It is the thin opening wedge for the subversion of democracy, Christianity, and tolerance in general." Only a conservatism based on the "rooted" values of America's Judeo-Christian heritage and an understanding of "the inner unremovable nature of man as the ultimate source of evil" could protect Western civilization from attempts to undermine—or perfect—it. The United States, Viereck wrote, should "everywhere answer illegal force with force-in-law, returning words for words and bullets for bullets."

Viereck became a historian, specializing in modern Russia, and a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet. But, in a series of books published during the late nineteen-forties and early nineteen-fifties (which have recently been reissued by Transaction), he continued to develop his political philosophy. He gave the conservative movement its name and, as the historian George Nash, the author of "The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America," says, he "helped make conservatism a respectable word." Moreover, Viereck's belief that the United States could be a moderating influence, confronting the forces that threaten freedom and democracy without succumbing to liberal optimism, became a central tenet of conservative thought and, with the arrival of neoconservatives in positions of power in Washington, beginning in the nineteen-eighties, of American foreign policy.

Yet Viereck never became a rallying figure. Conservatism remained largely an intellectual movement during its first several decades, from the late nineteen-forties to the late nineteen-seventies—a loose affiliation of scholars and writers who had little more in common than a hatred of liberalism and Communism,

Peter Viereck anticipated the radicalism of the Bush Presidency by decades.

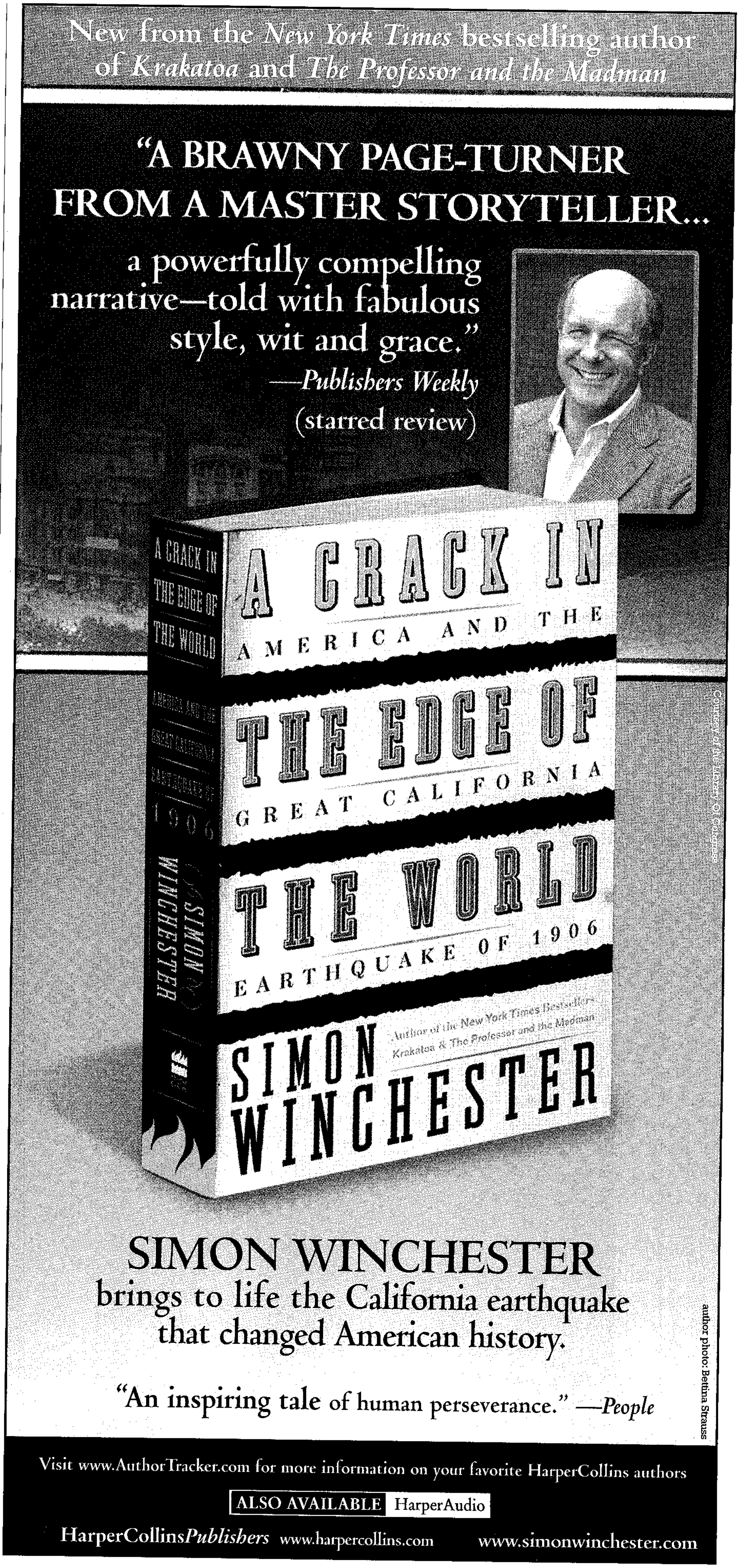
COURTESY PETER VIERECK

which they increasingly saw as indistinguishable. Even in this context, Viereck was an anomaly, insisting on a moral distinction between the moderate and the totalitarian left and, as conservatives began to attain political influence, denouncing what he perceived as the movement's demagogic tendencies. Conservatives, he wrote in 1955, are "trying to overthrow an old ruling class and replace it from below by a new ruling class. . . . The new would-be rulers include unmellowed plebeian Western wealth"—here he singled out Texan oil money—"and their enormous gullible mass-base."

In 1962, he published an attack on conservatives in *The New Republic*, titled "The New Conservatism: One of Its Founders Asks What Went Wrong," in which he depicted a movement infiltrated by religious fundamentalists, paranoid patriotic groups, and big-business leaders, united in their loathing for the cosmopolitan élites on the nation's coasts. "American history is based on the resemblance between moderate liberalism and moderate conservatism," he wrote, and this tradition, which had saved the United States from Europe's violent fate, conservatives now threatened to destroy. Viereck's vision strikingly resembles the description of the contemporary Republican Party in last year's best-selling book by Thomas Frank, "What's the Matter with Kansas?" He anticipated the radicalism of the George W. Bush Presidency before Bush had graduated from college. But by then Viereck was regarded by many conservatives as an apostate.

Viereck is now eighty-nine years old and living in retirement in South Hadley, Massachusetts. To say that he has been forgotten by conservatives is not quite right; he has practically been erased from the picture, like an early Bolshevik fallen out of favor. But in conservatism's rise to power he foresaw its corruption by extremists, and his break with the movement may ultimately be more significant than his role in its creation.

I first met Viereck in the fall of 2002. His house, a rambling Victorian, overlooks the playing fields of Mount Holyoke College, where he taught history for nearly fifty years, until 1997. I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AMERICA AND THE GREAT CALIFORNIA EARTHQUAKE OF 1906
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Author of the New York Times Bestsellers Krakatoa & The Professor and the Madman
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"I'll be happy to give you innovative thinking. What are the guidelines?"

• •

found him sitting in semi-darkness at an enormous wooden dining table that he used as a desk, a gaunt figure in a silk robe and two matching blue silk scarves, one of which he wore as an ascot, the other as a turban.

His nose seemed perpetually pointed upward. In the dim light, I could see that his eyes were an icy gray-blue, and, along with his sharp profile, they seemed to lend credence to a story I had heard that Viereck was a relative, though an illegitimate one, of Kaiser Wilhelm II. (When I'd asked Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., about Viereck, who had been a classmate at Harvard, Schlesinger's wife, Alexandra, said, "You mean the Kaiser's grandson!") I mentioned the resemblance to Viereck, who waved his hand dismissively.

"I have cataracts in both eyes, inoperable, hence the ghoulish atmosphere," he said. "But I hate all this royalty nonsense. My father was obsessed with that."

Viereck's father, George Sylvester Viereck, known as Sylvester, or G.S.V., was the embodiment of much that Viereck loathed. He was a features writer for the Hearst newspaper syndicate, and had once been considered a promising lyric poet. (In 1907, when Sylvester was twenty-three, the *Times* reported that his poems had "awakened the profound interest of two continents.") He was also an admirer of Germany, his birthplace, and, in particular, of Kaiser Wilhelm, in part because he believed himself to be a grandson of the Kaiser's grandfather, Wilhelm I of Prussia, via an assignation with a Berlin actress named Edwina Viereck. Edwina's son, Louis, became a socialist and a friend of Karl Marx. He was imprisoned several times for his political activities; once, he was implicated in a plot to assassinate his father. In 1881, he married an American cousin (Friedrich Engels attended the wedding), and Sylvester was born in Munich three years later. In 1896, the family emigrated to New York City.

Sylvester, who published his first poem, in a Baltimore newspaper, at the age of thirteen, attended City College and eventually settled, with his wife, Gretchen, in an apartment on Riverside Drive, where they raised their two sons, Peter and his younger brother, George Sylvester, Jr. But he also continued to spend time in Germany. In August, 1914, just as war was breaking out in Europe, he had co-founded *The Fatherland*, a weekly magazine, published in New York, with a pro-German theme, and established the Fatherland Foundation, an organization dedicated to making "German-Americans proud of the hyphen." In July, 1915, a Secret Service agent followed Sylvester and a mysterious German named Heinrich Albert as they rode the Sixth Avenue subway, and managed to seize Albert's briefcase. Inside were documents outlining pro-German propaganda schemes and bank statements detailing transfers of large sums from Germany to private accounts around the United States. A few weeks later, the *Times* alleged that Sylvester had known about German plans to sink the Lusitania. He denied the charge and was never prosecuted. But his reputation was damaged: the Authors League expelled him, his poems were removed from anthologies, and his name was dropped from *Who's Who*.

After the war, he managed briefly to rehabilitate himself. In 1923, he published "Rejuvenation: How Steinach Makes People Young," a book about a Viennese physician who used hormones to slow aging. Sigmund Freud read it and invited Sylvester to write a similar book about psychoanalysis. Sylvester agreed and became a leading popularizer of Freudian thought in the United States.

"My father was always going to Vienna to visit Freud, and Adler, the inferiority-complex guy, would come visit our house," Viereck told me. "Our whole house was full of Freudian psychoanalysis. My father was being analyzed by Freud, who said he was looking for some strong man, some dominant father figure."

In the late nineteen-twenties, with Paul Eldridge, a Jewish friend, Sylvester wrote a trilogy of best-selling novels chronicling the adventures of an apparently immortal "Wandering Jew." (Sylvester himself was Lutheran.) The books combined politics, history, and philo-Semitic race theory with a good deal of sex. Sylvester also interviewed Albert Einstein, who confided, "When

500 shares of stagnant.
250 shares of rudderless.
1000 shares of dwindling.

3 words of advice.

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I met you, I knew I could talk to you freely without the inhibitions which make the contact with others so difficult. I looked upon you not as a German nor as an American, but as a Jew."

At the same time, however, Sylvester was increasingly drawn to Nazism. In 1923, he became the first American reporter to interview Hitler, whom he described as "a widely read, thoughtful, and self-made man," who, "if he lived, would make history." In May, 1934, Sylvester gave a speech to twenty thousand "Friends of the New Germany," at Madison Square Garden. The hall was hung with American flags, swastikas, and pictures of George Washington and Hitler. Sylvester expressed admiration for Roosevelt and Hitler, arguing that both men were "trying their utmost to build a new world out of the wreck of the old." He urged the crowd to support National Socialism "without embracing anti-Semitism."

Jewish friends and colleagues denounced him in the press, calling him "George Swastika Viereck." "Mrs. Einstein wrote a letter to my father saying they couldn't continue relations unless he repudiated the Nazis," Viereck recalled. "And my father replied with total tactlessness, lack of feeling, lack of empathy. He said, 'Let the Jews stop attacking Hitler and Hitler will stop attacking them.' Well, this was monstrous."

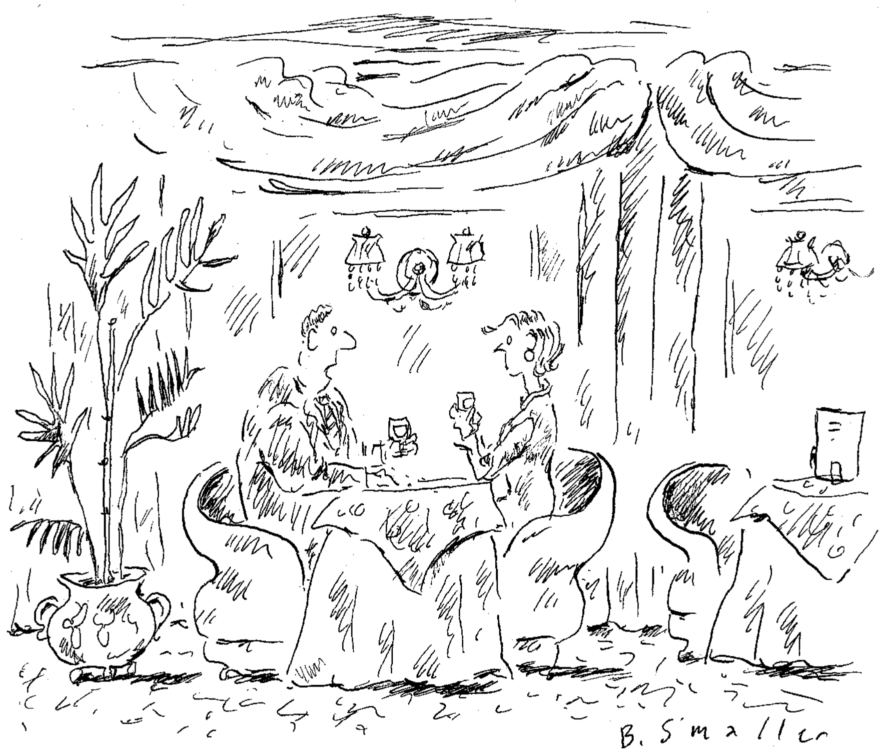
By the late thirties, Sylvester's literary agent, who was Jewish, had dropped him, as had his book publisher, and he was increasingly dependent on the Nazis for work. He distributed money funnelled to him by the Reich to pro-Nazi groups and started a publishing company to spread isolationist propaganda. Investigated by the F.B.I., he was arrested in September, 1941, convicted of conspiring with the Nazis, and served four years in federal prison. (In 1942, he and twenty-seven others were charged with sedition; the case was eventually dismissed.) His wife left him, giving away what remained of the family's money to Jewish refugee committees and Catholic charities, and Upton Sinclair wrote to him to say, "If there is a Benedict Arnold of this war, you are he." Peter, then a graduate student in history at Harvard, removed his belongings from the apartment on Riverside Drive and remained estranged from his father for sixteen years.

In October, 1941, while Sylvester was on trial, Viereck published his first book: "Metapolitics: From the Romantics to Hitler," a study of the origins of Nazism. The book prompted newspaper stories with melodramatic headlines, such as "TOP NAZI AGENT'S SON, HARVARD MAN, EXPOSES TRUE ROOTS OF NAZIS." But it was praised by scholars and writers, including Thomas Mann, then living in exile in the United States, who admired its "profound historical and psychological insight." Viereck argued that Nazism grew out of the Romantic German nationalist movements of the nineteenth century, rather than the authoritarian Prussian tradition. This idea is now generally accepted, but at the time Viereck's analysis was controversial. He criticized the composer Richard Wagner not only for his anti-Semitism during his final years but for his youthful revolutionary activity against the Habsburg empire, and he applauded Metternich, the Austrian chancellor, for opposing radicals of both the left and the right and for his efforts—frequently overlooked—at social reform. Metternich, who is usually depicted as a reactionary, was in Viereck's view a moderate and a visionary.

When America entered the war, in December, 1941, Peter's brother, George Sylvester, Jr., volunteered, and fifteen months later Peter himself was drafted. Because of their father's crime, the brothers were prohibited from becoming officers and from serving in the O.S.S. Peter became the highest-ranking enlisted man in the Army's Psychological Warfare Branch and was sent to an intelligence training school in Algiers, where he was assigned to propaganda analysis.

"My job was to try to read between the lines," he told me. "It was like what the C.I.A. does now, only it was a lot easier then because you didn't need to speak Arabic. They put me to reading, mostly things in German, there in the middle of the desert. I was fascinated. I would write these analyses, sitting at a battered old typewriter." When he wasn't typing intelligence reports, he wrote poems, publishing several of them in *The New Yorker*, under the byline "Sgt. Peter Viereck."

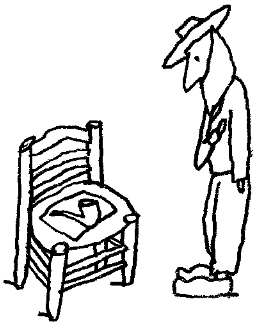
The week in May, 1944, that his poem "Ode to the M.P. Chasing Me Through a North African Town" appeared in this magazine, *Time* published a dispatch about his brother, under the heading "HEROES: FATHER & SONS":



"No, I don't think we need counselling. This is our first date."

Late in February a U.S. battalion in Italy made a gallant and determined stand against the Germans from a cave on the rocky road that runs north from Anzio. Cut off from supplies and fighting for a week without replacements, the battalion, in the words of New York *Herald Tribune* Correspondent Homer Bigart, "withstood the cruelest pressure any American unit has been called upon to face in this war."

Correspondent Bigart singled out for special mention the work of 25-year-old Corporal George Sylvester Viereck Jr., who stood in the mouth of the cave blasting away with his Garand rifle at oncoming Nazis while an artillery barrage thundered down on them from the rear. Said Corporal Viereck: "We had a feeling of animal joy as that stuff came down on the surrounding Germans."



Slight and blond, young Viereck was a onetime student at Harvard Law School, a graduate *magna cum laude* of Harvard College. There he had helped found and edit a new liberal monthly magazine, the *Harvard Guardian*.

Immediately on reading the dispatch from Anzio, Corporal Viereck's mother sat down in her Manhattan apartment to write her son a letter of congratulations.

Last week the letter came back. Across it was stamped the word "DECEASED." That was the way she got the news.

Next day, in a barren cell under the Washington courtroom where he is on trial for sedition, Naziphile George Sylvester Viereck Sr., already serving a one-to-five-year prison term as an unregistered agent of the Reich, listened stolidly as his wife broke the news to him.

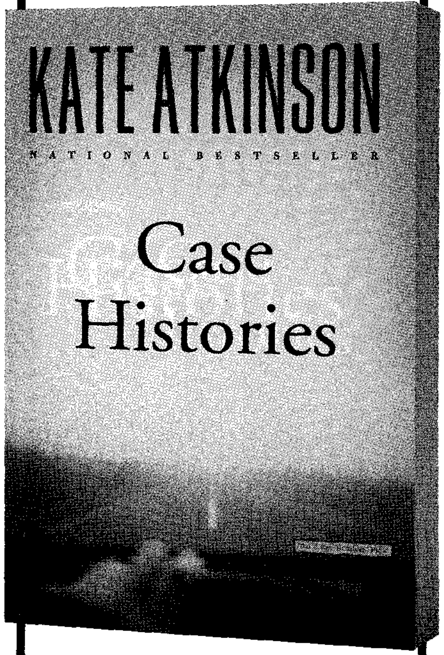
Peter Viereck was in Tunisia when he got the news of his brother's death. He promptly composed "*Vale* from Carthage," which began, "'And what if one of us' / I asked last May, in fun, in gentleness, / 'Wears doom, like dungarees, and doesn't know?'" He included the poem in his first collection, "Terror and Decorum," for which he won a Pulitzer Prize, in 1949. His brother's death completed the "shattering of the family," Viereck told me.

He returned from the war with Anya de Markov, a Russian who had been a resistance fighter, smuggling cash and documents across the Nazi border with Italy, and whom he had met and married while on a tour of duty in Florence. In 1946, he took a job teaching literature at Harvard, and the Vierecks had a son, John Alexis, followed two years later by a daughter, Valerie Edwina. Viereck turned down an offer from the University of Chicago in order to accept a tenured position at Mount Holyoke, where he could live in the country and combine writing poetry and political philosophy with raising a family.

The war had convinced Viereck of the urgency of bringing together the moderate left and right to fight totalitarianism, which was now represented by the Soviet Union. In 1949, he published "Conservatism Revisited: The Revolt Against Revolt," an expanded version of his *Atlantic Monthly* essay. In it, Viereck invoked the writings of Edmund Burke, then an unfashionable thinker, borrowing Burke's notion that liberty can never be attained through revolution but only from the slow evolution of social custom. Viereck cited not just Burke's famous contempt for the French Revolution but also his less well-known admiration for the American one, along with his opposition to slavery. Burke's views suggested to Viereck that conservatives could simultaneously fight segregation and protect the moderate reforms of the New Deal, while combatting the spread of Communism abroad. "Conservatism Revisited" was the book that "created the new conservatism as a self-conscious intellectual force," George Nash writes in his history of the movement, noting that "it was this book which boldly used the word 'conservatism' in its title—the first such book after 1945."

In 1950, Viereck, confident that he shared a "rooted" morality with other new conservatives, began to speak out against Senator Joseph McCarthy.

It is hard to recall now that the junior senator from Wisconsin had nothing to do with most of the cases that we associate with the McCarthy era: Alger Hiss, the Rosenbergs, the Hollywood Ten. Throughout those trials, McCarthy remained an obscure politician, whose most vehement speech was against sugar rationing. He did not adopt anti-Communism as an issue until the spring of 1950—after the Soviet Union exploded an atomic bomb and Mao took power in China—and there is no evidence that he felt strongly about Communism, except as fodder for a publicity stunt. McCarthy's anti-Communist campaign amounted to slandering prominent public figures on the floor of the



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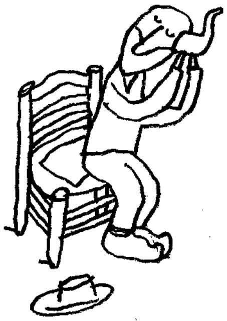
Senate—where he was immune from civil prosecution—and his preferred targets were establishment icons such as Dean Acheson, the Secretary of State, whom he called "Red Dean," and General George C. Marshall.

Viereck's anti-Communist credentials were beyond question: he had always advocated defending democracy from extremists. But he thought that McCarthy's crusade was discrediting the anti-Communist cause: "That the McCarthy movement normally accuses only non-Communists of 'Communism' is one of the main rules of the game," he complained in 1955. Worse, he believed that the Senator was not a conservative patriot, or even simply an opportunist. McCarthy, Viereck said, was a radical of the left. In a typical speech, at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, in New York, in 1954, Viereck subjected the Senator to a Burkean critique:

> McCarthy basically is not the fascist type but the type of the left-wing anarchist agitator, by an infallible instinct and not "by accident" subverting precisely those institutions that are the most conservative and organic, everything venerable and patrician, from the Constitution, and precisely the most decorated or paternal generals (Marshall, Eisenhower, Taylor, Zwicker), to the leaders of our most deeply established religion and precisely the most ancient of our universities.... He satisfies the resentments of his followers, because his sincerest hatred is always against the oldest, most rooted, and most deeply educated patrician families—the Cabot Lodges, Achesons, Conants, Adlai Stevenson.



McCarthyism, Viereck wrote, "is the revenge of the noses that for twenty years of fancy parties were pressed against the outside window pane." (What Viereck abhorred about McCarthy, Ann Coulter, in her recent book "Treason: Liberal Treachery from the Cold War to the War on Terrorism," openly admires: "McCarthy's real 'victims' were not sympathetic witnesses, frivolous Hollywood screenwriters, or irrelevant blowhard college professors. They were elite WASP establishment policy-makers.... They were well-born and looked good in dinner jackets.... Angry ethnics like Joe McCarthy made much better Americans.")

Viereck wrote to several conservative friends, asking them to join him in signing a statement denouncing McCarthy from the right, but the project went nowhere. Max Eastman, the former Communist writer, said that he thought that McCarthy was a liar, but an invaluable one. Russell Kirk accused Viereck of "McCarthyism against McCarthy." By the mid-fifties, Viereck had more admirers in Europe than in the United States. In 1954, the *Times Literary Supplement* called him "the most controversial of the younger school of American authors" and praised his "skillful and adventurous skirmish in the fields of political controversy and polemic." Two years later, the political philosopher Willmoore Kendall assailed Viereck in *National Review*, complaining that he lectured people on "how to be a conservative and yet agree with the Liberals about Everything," and Frank Meyer, a former Communist who had become the culture editor of *National Review*, called Viereck a "counterfeit conservative."

The attacks on Viereck coincided with the movement's emergence as a powerful cultural force—a development that even conservatives were hard put to explain. As Viereck's friend the historian Clinton Rossiter put it in his 1955 study "Conservatism in America": "After generations of exile from respectability, the word [conservative] itself has been welcomed home with cheers by men who, a few short years ago, would sooner have been called arsonists than conservatives." Rossiter described the spread of conservative ideas in politics and culture as "one of the wonders of the post-war years," as "momentous" as the invention of television and the H-bomb. Viereck told me that he thought "Conservatism Revisited" had "opened people's minds to the idea that to be conservative is not to be satanic." But, he said, "once their minds were opened, Buckley came in."

In 1951, William F. Buckley published his first book, "God and Man at Yale," and the *Times Book Review* asked Viereck to review it. Viereck, who was thirty-five, a decade older than Buckley, praised him for acknowledging

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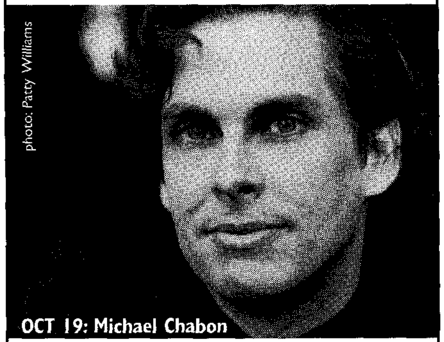

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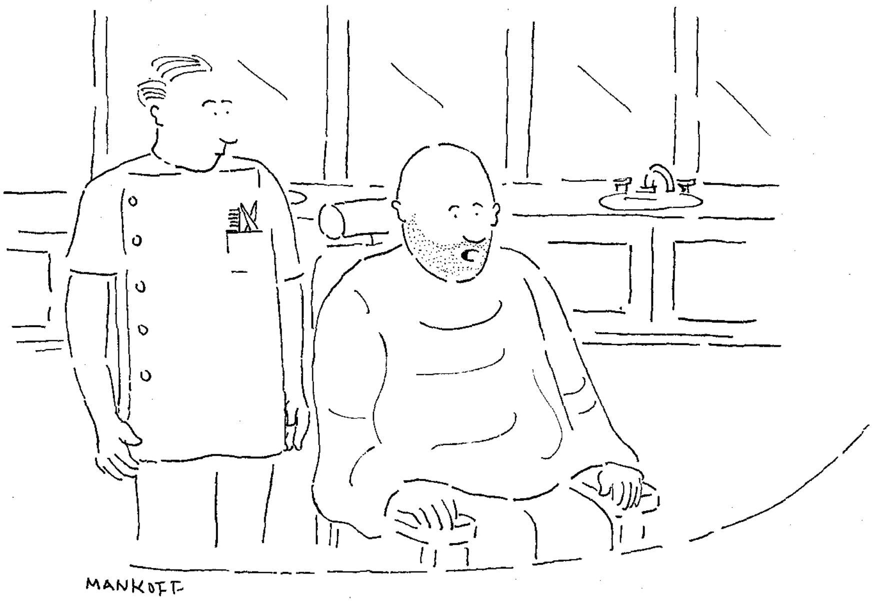
that "freedom depends on the traditional value-code of the West and that unmoral materialism results in a suicidal tolerance debunking all values as equally 'relative.' " But he recoiled at Buckley's stance on McCarthy—"Why is this veritable Eagle Scout of moral sternness silent on the moral implications of McCarthyism?" he asked—and at what he took to be Buckley's radicalism.

Buckley had been put off by Yale, where, he insisted, leftist and antireligious views prevailed: "The institution derives its moral and financial support from Christian individualists, then addresses itself to the task of persuading the sons of these supporters to be atheistic socialists." As a corrective, Buckley proposed eliminating the "superstition" of academic freedom, turning control of the curriculum over to the university's trustees, firing any professor whose views they disapproved of, and reviving the school's original "mission" to instill a "belief in God, and a recognition of the merits of our economic system." Buckley's ideas were hardly Burkean, and Viereck feared and disliked them.

Ultimately, however, the differences between the two men were as much a matter of temperament as of ideology. Buckley, despite his rhetoric, was a reconciler and an institution builder: his goal was to see conservatism become a politically dominant mass movement. To that end, in an effort to unite libertarians, traditionalists, and anti-Communists, he founded *National Review*, in 1955, encouraging contributors to attack liberals when they might have preferred to criticize each other. He also succeeded in excluding politically damaging extremists—bigots and members of the John Birch Society—from the conservative movement. Viereck was scornful of this achievement, considering it of a piece with a tactic used by McCarthy which Viereck called "transtolerance" and defined as a feature of the new right wing whereby "manifestations of ethnic intolerance tend to decrease in proportion as ideological intolerance increases. . . . Transtolerance is ready to give all minorities their glorious democratic freedom—provided they accept McCarthyism." To Viereck, who venerated institutions and compromise in his writing but remained unyielding and aloof, Buckley represented the contamination of conservative ideals by politics.



"A shave and a shine."

• •

"Yes, he reviewed my first book somewhere," Buckley said, when I met with him recently, in the study of his home on the Upper East Side. "He was critical. But there was a glint of 'This guy may be worth saving,' that kind of thing." Buckley stared at the ceiling and then, lowering his gaze to meet mine, broke into a puckish grin. I couldn't help noticing the similarities between him and Viereck: the pale-blue eyes, the sharp features, the tendency to look heavenward when thinking.

Buckley's study, with its matching sets of leather volumes, was the antithesis of Viereck's, where every surface was covered with messy stacks of books and papers. Still, I thought Viereck would have approved of the home's aristocratic shabbiness, of the fact that the front door was old and unpolished, its number obscured by black paint. Buckley wore a loosened tie underneath his crewneck sweater. I hadn't seen anyone dress this way since I was in prep school, and it made him seem boyish.

Buckley recalled meeting Viereck in the mid-fifties, after giving a lecture at Smith. "I came out of the lecture and this thin, angular man bounded over and said, 'My name is Peter Viereck. Can we talk?' And I said, 'Well, I'd love to talk, but I've got a car here with somebody who's driving me back to New York City.' 'Can I walk with you to the car?' he said. I said, 'Of course.' He was on a bicycle"—Buckley was still marvelling at the notion, half a century later. "So we chatted for about five minutes, as we walked in a leisurely direction, and then he fell. So I dragged him out of this sort of ditch. It didn't interrupt his talking for one second! I had just begun *National Review* about then—well, he had written something critical about it, but in the context of how America needed a conservative magazine. But *National Review* should, in Peter's opinion, begin by acknowledging that the true conservative on the American scene was Adlai Stevenson! Of course, that was just preposterous from our point of view." (Viereck had endorsed Adlai Stevenson for President in 1956; Stevenson had made Viereckian pronouncements throughout his campaign, arguing that "the strange alchemy of time has somehow converted the Democrats into the truly conservative party [while] Republicans are behaving like the radical party, reckless, and embittered, dismantling institutions built solidly into our social fabric." And former President Harry Truman had complained, referring to Stevenson, that a "self-proclaimed conservative" should not be running on the Democratic ticket.)

John Judis, in his 1988 biography of Buckley, mentions that Buckley had written to his publisher, after completing "God and Man at Yale," to propose a book that would "examine the claims of Peter Viereck . . . to representing the 'legitimate conservatism.' " But when I asked Buckley about the idea, he dismissed it with a flick of his wrist, saying that Viereck represented "a sort of pre-neoconservatism none of us had any use for." Instead, Buckley's next book was "McCarthy and His Enemies," an impassioned defense of McCarthyism, published in 1954.

Buckley's housekeeper, a stout Slovak woman, served us hamburgers, on fine china, with ramekins for ketchup and mustard on each plate, and I asked Buckley how he felt about conservatism's current course. "I'm not happy about it," he said. "It's probably true that there"—in the support for the war in Iraq—"you have a rediscovery of idealism. But if one acknowledged the second inaugural address of the President as marching orders, well, that would keep us busy with something to do for all eternity. It's not, in my judgment, conservatism. Because conservatism is, to a considerable extent, the acknowledgment of realities. And this is surreal."

Viereck might have put it the same way.

In the mid-sixties, Viereck stopped writing about politics and devoted himself to poetry and Russian history. (He may be the only American ever awarded a Guggenheim fellowship in both history and poetry.) He travelled to the Soviet Union, and brought Joseph Brodsky to Mount Holyoke, where they co-taught a poetry class, "Poets Under Totalitarianism"—which Viereck referred to as "Rhyme and Punishment." Viereck also reconciled with his father, who moved into Viereck's home in 1959, three years before he died. He spent twenty years working on an epic poem, "Archer in the Marrow." Published in 1987, it imagines a world in which Western Europe lost the Crusades and became Muslim, and Lucrezia Borgia was elected Pope.

The historian Joseph Ellis, who teaches at Mount Holyoke and has known Viereck for thirty years, says that Viereck reminds him of John Adams. "There's something contrarian about both of their temperaments that will never allow it to remain comfortable if accepted by any political group," Ellis told me. "They're combustible, and they are uncomfortable with democracy, if democracy means majority rule. They think majorities are mostly wrong. They're happiest when they are being denounced. They know they must be right then."

I happened to visit Viereck on the day of the Iraqi elections, in January. He was wearing a yellow ascot and turban, but joked about his poor health and was using a walker. Still, he was writing introductions to the new editions of his works, and books on conservatism, revolution, Nazism, and poetry lay open on every surface. Viereck had a nurse, and his second wife, from whom he is separated, lived nearby and visited several times a month to cook him meals. Whenever I saw him, however, he was alone. (His son, John Alexis, is an Episcopal priest who lives in California; his daughter, Valerie, is a mother of three who lives in Ohio.)

"Where are the roots?" he said, when I asked him what he thought of the elections. "How can you have a democracy without roots? England had the roots. Switzerland had the roots. Holland had the roots. My hunch is that Iraq has no deep roots, and therefore the best thing you can hope for is inefficient corruption. Some kind of moderate thug ruler, instead of a mass-murdering thug like Saddam. I don't think in practice more could happen. I think it would take more than a couple of generations."

He went on, "I think McCarthy was a menace not because of the risk that he would take over—that was never real—but because he corrupted the ethics of American conservatives, and that corruption leads to the situation we have now. It gave the conservatives the habit of appeasing the forces of the hysterical right and to looking to these forces—and appeasing them knowingly, expediently. I think that was the original sin of the conservative movement, and we are all suffering from it."

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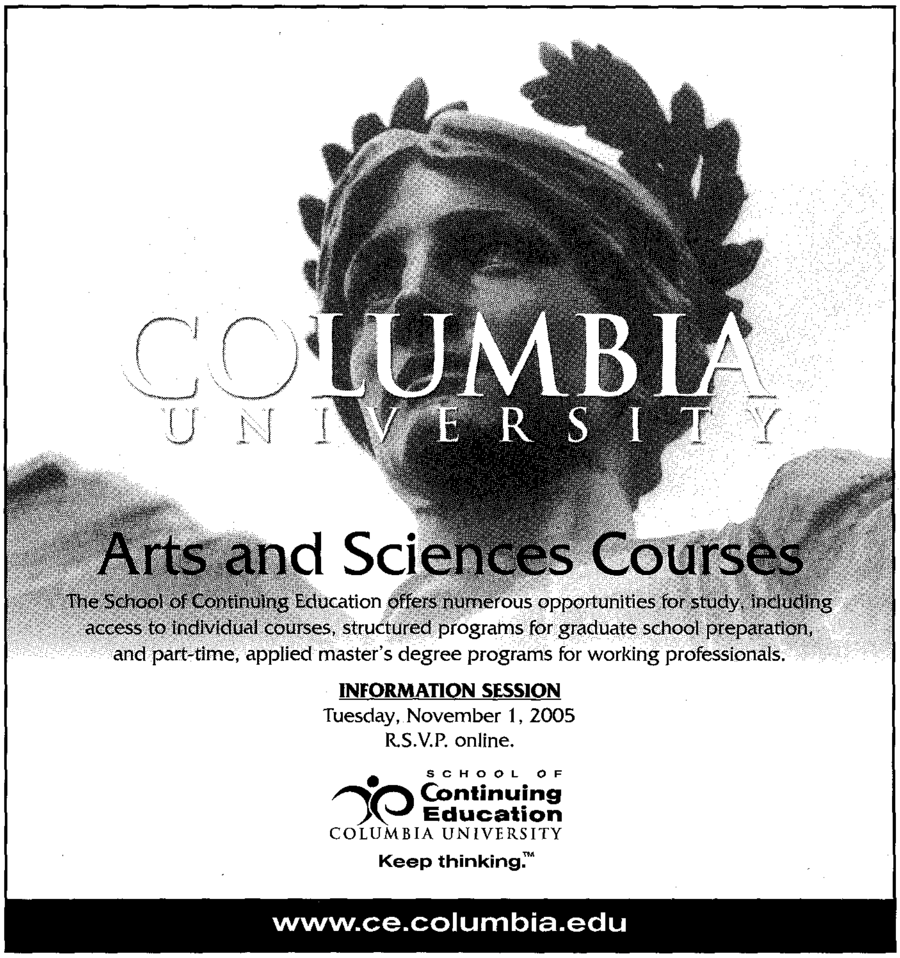
The visit was my last to Viereck's home. In March, he was hospitalized with heart and kidney conditions, which kept him on his back for so many weeks that he lost the use of his legs. When I saw him again, in April, he was confined to bed in a cinder-block nursing home in South Hadley. "There's no privacy here at all," he explained with a grin, when I arrived. He mused about the difference between Antaean and Procrustean approaches to life, vividly recasting the bed of Procrustes as a parable about the torture chamber of Fascism. "This is all good, to be reminded of one's mortality," he said. "It keeps one rooted to the ground. Like Antaeus, we die when we stop touching the ground."

A nurse looked on bemusedly as Viereck launched into a speech about the lack of aristocratic virtues in contemporary America. "Death would be so inconvenient," he said, suddenly pausing. "I have only about two more weeks to go on this new essay I'm working on for the beginning of 'Strict Wildness'"—a collection of his writings on conservatism in politics and poetry, which will be published by Transaction in November. But soon he embarked on a new discussion, about whether the Declaration of Independence was a conservative or a radical document. (He decided that it was both.)

In "The Messiness of History," his final lecture at Mount Holyoke before retiring, in 1997, Viereck warned his students of the dangers of trying to democratize the world:

> What causes the greatest crimes in history? The greatest bloodshed? The most murders? I would say two things: sincere love and a sincere devotion to liberty. . . . If you kill out of love or for a perfect utopia, you never stop killing because human nature is always imperfect. Robespierre, rightly called "the incorruptible," was more sincere than Danton and always found somebody deviating just a little bit from true liberty.

At the end of the lecture, Viereck qualified his pessimism a little: "I can think of nothing more gallant, even though again and again we fail, than attempting to get at the facts; attempting to tell things as they really are. For at least reality, though never fully attained, can be defined. Reality is that which, when you don't believe in it, doesn't go away." ♦



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   Have ____ Not have ____ somebody check first to find out if it's a foreign-language-type country.

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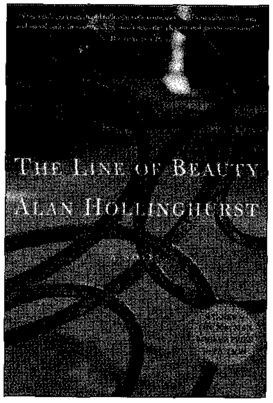
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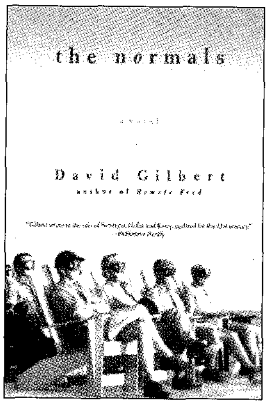
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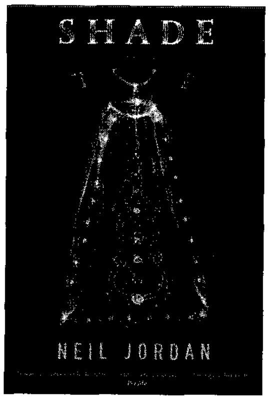
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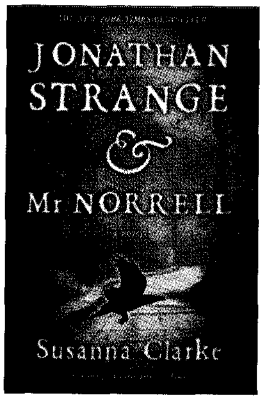
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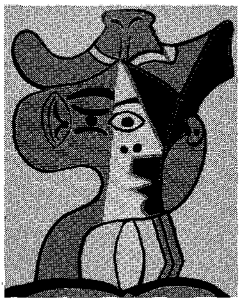

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PROFILES

QUIET DEPRAVITY

The demure outrages of a standup comic.

BY DANA GOODYEAR

The comedian Sarah Silverman exerts a kind of mesmeric control over an audience. She doesn't laugh at her own jokes, and when she smiles it is deliberately inappropriate. The expression that lingers on her face is usually one of tentative confusion or of chipper self-satisfaction, as if she had finished her homework and cleaned up her room, and were waiting for a gold star. “I'm just sensitive,” she says onstage. “My skin is paper thin. People don't realize it, because I'm sassy and I'm brassy, but I just— I see these CARE commercials with these little kids with the giant bellies and the flies, and these are one- and two-year-old babies, *nine* months pregnant, and it breaks my heart in two.”

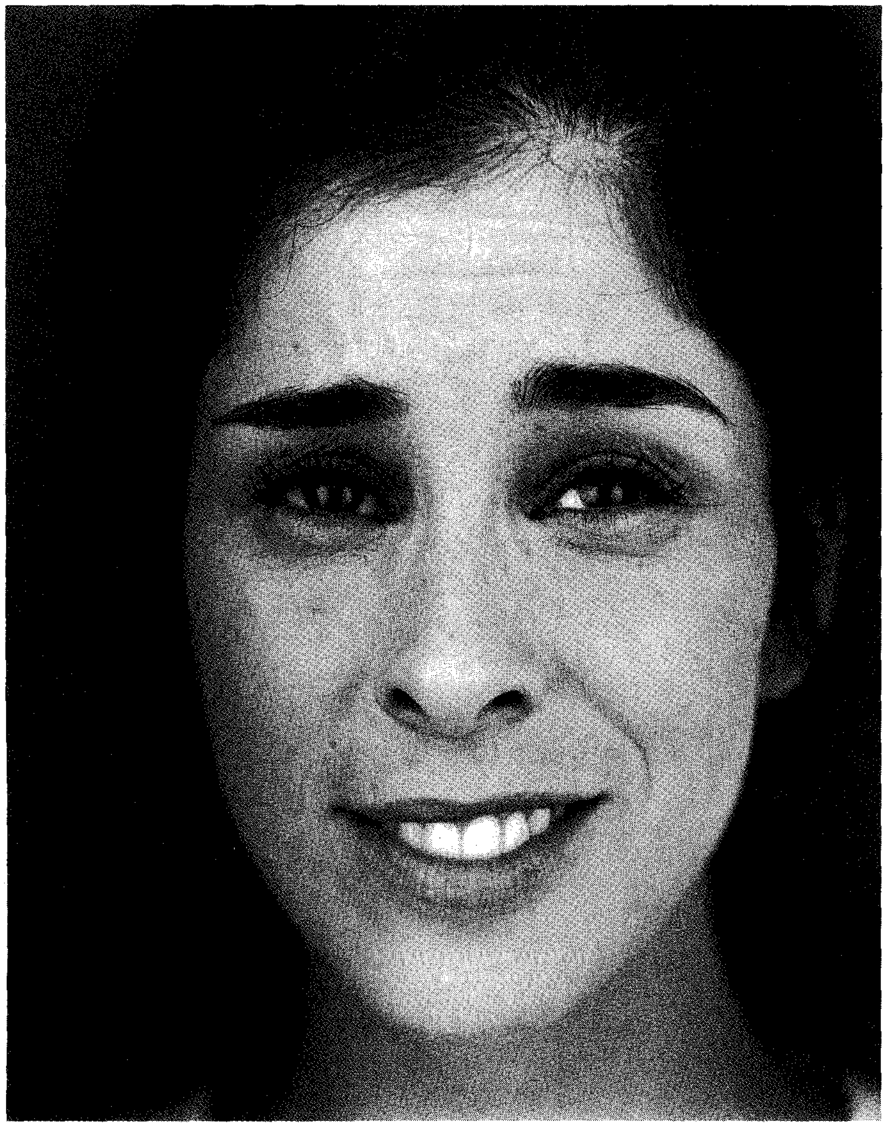
As the audience reacts, she presses on. “It breaks my heart in half. And I don't give money, because”—out of the side of her mouth—“I don't want them to spend it on drugs, but I give. You know I *give.* I, this past summer, sent fifteen really fun cowl-neck sweaters to this village in Africa, in *really* fun colors—expecting nothing, by the way—and they culled their money together, whatever they call it, and bought a stamp and sent me a postcard thanking me, and it said thank you and that they had enough sweaters for every single member of the village to get one and that they were delicious.”

Silverman is thirty-four and coltish, with shiny black hair and a china-doll complexion. Her arms are long and her center of gravity is low: she is five feet seven, and moves like a vervet monkey. Onstage, she is beguilingly calm. She speaks clearly and decorously. “Quiet depravity” is how Michael McKean, who was with her in the cast of “Saturday Night Live” (she was a writer and a featured player for the 1993-94 season), describes her demeanor. The persona she has crafted is strangely Pollyanna-ish and utterly absorbed in her own point of view: “I wear this St. Christopher medal sometimes because—I'm Jewish, but my boyfriend is Catholic—it was cute the way he gave it to me. He said if it doesn't burn through my skin it will protect me.” In another of her bits, she invokes the events of September 11th: “They were devastating. They were beyond devastating. I don't want to say especially for these people, or especially for these people, but especially for me, because it happened to be the same exact day that I found out that the soy chai latte was, like, nine hundred calories. I had been drinking them *every day.* You hear soy, you think healthy. And it's a lie.” Her constructions are minimal but the turn is sharp. “I was raped by a doctor,” she says. “Which is so bittersweet for a Jewish girl.”

Comedy is probably the last remaining branch of the arts whose suitability for women is still openly discussed. Several years ago, Jerry Lewis, then in his early seventies, reportedly told an audience at the Aspen Comedy Festival that he didn't much care for female comedians and couldn't think of one who was any good. Lewis's views were criticized in public but upheld by some, in modified form, in private. “When you went home alone and did the math, he was just kind of right,” Penn Jillette, the magician-comedian, says. “I mean, what passes for funny in women is, like, Lucille Ball, who was never funny.” Lewis apologized in a press release—he praised Phyllis Diller and Carol Burnett—and later clarified his position on “Larry King Live”: “I said, ‘Some women comedians make me uncomfortable,’ because a man comedian can do anything he wants and I'm not offended by it. But we're talking about a God-given miracle, who produces a child. I have a difficult time seeing her do this onstage.”

Phyllis Diller, whom Jillette, too, regards as funny, dispensed with the gender thing by wearing a wig and silly boots and gloves and telling jokes about how ugly she was. “I came out as a clown,” she says. "A clown is androgynous. They didn't worry if I was a man or a woman." Moms Mabley, safely old by the time she entered mainstream comedy, joked about her taste for young men; Roseanne Barr was a stout blue-collar "domestic goddess"; Margaret Cho says she is a "fag hag." Silverman presents herself as approachable though deranged, a sort of twisted Gracie Allen, and she never breaks character. She talks about herself so ingenuously that you can't tell if she is the most vulnerable woman in the world or the most psychotically well defended.

Silverman crosses boundaries that it would not occur to most people even to have. The more innocent and oblivious her delivery, the more outrageous her commentary becomes. Lenny Bruce's "Jews killed Christ" joke ("I did it. My family. . . . Not only did we kill Christ, we're going to kill him when he comes back") is reprised with a harder edge. "Everybody blames the Jews for killing Christ," Silverman says. "And then the Jews try to pass it off on the Romans. I'm one of the few people that believe it was the blacks." She skewers hypocrisy and self-righteousness, but there are times when her narrative ingredients—rape, dead grandmothers—threaten to overwhelm the delicate balance of a joke (rape being one of the last remaining taboos in today's sexual politics; grandmothers being what they are). In a catchy song she sings about porn actresses—"Do you ever take drugs / so that you can have sex without crying? / Yeah yeah"—the bald sermonizing, over an upbeat pop melody, is dissonant and odd but somehow not really funny. Who doesn't feel sorry for porn actresses?


Sarah Silverman in Los Angeles, October 11th. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.

CORBIS

In "The Aristocrats," a documentary by Paul Provenza and Penn Jillette, which shows dozens of comedians telling their own versions of what is supposed to be the world's dirtiest joke—an improvised yarn about a performing family who approach a talent agent with a pornographic act called the Aristocrats—Silverman decides to turn the story inward. She begins, "I don't put the Aristocrats on my résumé anymore. It doesn't take away from my pride. I actually was an Aristocrat. It's kind of weird to be part of that legend." She goes on to describe a shocking choreography ("It's pretty spectacular, and it's all about timing") and the special interest taken in her family by Joe Franklin, the gnomelike "King of Nostalgia," who for forty-three years had a talk show on which he interviewed celebrities.

"Joe Franklin loved the Aristocrats," she says. "He was, like, our rehearsal director when dad and my brother weren't there. And my mother, and my nana—weren't there. I was on his show. He said it wasn't a 'taped show,' but we, like, did a show. . . . It was his office, but he had a bed in it, like a couch, that he called Uncle Joe's bed for little people." She looks awkwardly into the corner of the room and, after a few seconds, turns her eyes back to the camera and says, "Joe Franklin raped me."

Provenza, who directed the movie, says, "Everybody else has gone so far out of his way to make it abstract and surreal in order to feel comfortable with these kinds of transgressions. She chooses to make it more real, and to actually have the emotional experience of somebody who's suffered this horrific, horrible existence. It's very disconcerting and uncomfortable. When it comes around at the end, she does what she does repeatedly, which is add some spin to it that makes it O.K. to laugh at. If the choice of who raped her was anybody but Joe Franklin, we couldn't deal with it. But by making it Joe Franklin she spins it off into absurdity yet again. Imagine Joe Franklin being sexual. There's an irony in that alone."

Franklin, who says he had never heard of Silverman until he was persuaded to comment on her work for the film's closing credits, is considering suing for defamation of character. "You know I'm in the 'Guinness Book of World Records'?"

"I'd like to start seeing other castaways."

• •

he said, when asked about the contretemps. "You know who I am—the world's longest-running TV talk-show host?" He went on to explain his position: "I was set up, I was duped, I was framed." He worries that the accusation won't play well on the nursing-home circuit. "The look on her face is severe," he said. "The other guys in that movie, most of them had a happy, jolly look. What's the word? Spoofing, tongue-in-cheeking. But she was very, very harsh and very convincing." Silverman further antagonized him when she went on television and, obviously having a good time, said, "He doesn't have the balls to sue."

Silverman rents a small apartment near Miracle Mile in Los Angeles. The living-room walls are striated with yellow paint, and decorated idiosyncratically: an antiqued photograph of her grandmother, her nana, who died five years ago at the age of eighty-eight; a sombrero; some abstract studies painted by her sister Laura and rescued from the trash. There is a cobalt-blue velvet couch and a silvery-pink armchair; the coffee table is mint-green, glass-topped, chipped. She has a little oil painting of her boyfriend, Jimmy Kimmel, made by a security guard for the late-night talk show he hosts on ABC, and a painting of a male nude by Anna Nicole Smith. In her office, formerly a dining room, with a faux-Tiffany stained-glass light fixture, are stacks of papers covered in notes: "Sarah Silverman's Tushy Party," "stubbed my vagina." Pictures of her cleaning lady's baby granddaughter, and of herself running a red light, as documented by a traffic-surveillance camera, are tacked to a bulletin board.

Silverman grew up in a liberal household near Manchester, New Hampshire. "We were a family that would talk back to the television," her mother, Beth Ann, says. "We would question everything. She learned that it was O.K. to make fun of what seems to be ridiculous." Beth Ann was the director of the theatre at a small liberal-arts college. (She founded the company, which has since become independent, and called it the New Thalian Players, after the muse of comedy.) Sarah's father, Donald, owned a small chain of clothing stores called Junior Deb/Varsity Shops, and an outlet in Concord called Crazy Sophie's. (Its motto, which he delivered on the radio in a slurry of New England vowels, was "Spend your time at the mall. Spend your money at Crazy Sophie's.") Nana, whose most frequently quoted line was "I love you, you're beautiful, don't get a perm," thought that Donald had named the store after a friend of hers called Sophie. "That's not nice," she said. He replied, "If I'd named the store after your friend Sophie, I'd have called it Ugly Sophie's." "I thought that was the best thing I'd ever heard," Sarah recalls. Donald taught Sarah to say "bitchbastarddamnshit" when she was two or three.

Sarah's parents divorced when she was six. She says that's when she became a "hard-core bed-wetter," a problem that persisted into high school. Susan, the oldest child (she is a rabbi, and the mother of four children, one of them adopted from Ethiopia), was fourteen; Laura, now an actress in Los Angeles, was eleven. Laura told me, "We saw Sarah crying after they told us—we were all crying—and we were, like, 'Oh, Sarah, are you O.K.?' "

"They were crying because their whole world had just fallen apart," Sarah said. "I was crying because I was doing a dance and no one was watching."

At twelve, Sarah had the lead in the Community Players of Concord's "Annie"; later, in school, she played the Jester in "Once Upon a Mattress" and Charity in "Sweet Charity" ("a popular high-school play about whores"). "Sarah's diction is immaculate," Beth Ann says. "Her final 't's and 'd's and 'p's—everything is beautiful with her." Sarah was small—"skinny, pale, and covered in black fur," Laura says—the size of a ten- or eleven-year-old until she was fifteen. She had panic attacks and, in ninth grade, missed three months of school. She observed adolescence from a distance. Even now, when she talks about herself in compromising ways, there is an air of exemption. She was in love with Steve Martin (whose seamless comic persona she clearly learned from) and her tenth-grade history teacher, the only Russian-Polish Jew outside of her family that she'd ever known. Susan remembers that at one of Sarah's early standup gigs—she was seventeen, and appearing at La Cantina, a local Mexican restaurant—she sang a song, to the tune of "Memories . . .," called "Mammaries," about wishing she had breasts. Susan says, "A few years later, she was doing that song and one of her fellow-comics said, 'Sarah, you know that you have boobs now. The song doesn't make sense anymore.' "

Silverman went to N.Y.U. and spent her freshman year passing out flyers on street corners to earn five-minute spots at a comedy club. After a year, her father agreed to let her take some time off to work on standup. (She never went back to school.) Her stepsister Jodyne Speyer, who studied film at N.Y.U., made a short film of her performing at the Boston Comedy Club, in Greenwich Village. In the footage, Silverman is nineteen, with coiffed bangs and a long, oval face she hasn't quite grown into. Her jokes are anodyne, the irony unhoned: "You know these mounted cops? You know what I'm talking about? I don't know what the deal is with them." Colin Quinn, a standup from Brooklyn who later had a show on Comedy Central, makes a cameo: "Sarah Silverman is a funny comedian, O.K.? She's not a funny female comedian. She's a funny comedian who happens to be female. . . . Her aura is funny—and hot."

Three years later, Silverman was hired by "Saturday Night Live," and joined a cast that included Mike Myers, Kevin Nealon, Julia Sweeney, and Adam Sandler, who had been in Laura Silverman's fourth-grade class. Michael McKean says that at that point the show "wasn't just a boys' club—it was a depressed boys' club." Silverman says she managed to get one sketch through dress rehearsal, but it was killed before the live show. She had her best luck in the Thursday punch-up meeting. "People look like they're growing molds after, like, three in the morning. They're sunk into the table like some sort of a fungus," McKean says. "Sarah just had this juice going at times. She used to remind me of Tigger. In the midst of all this gloomy, fearful dialogue there was this crazy girl jumping around." The one time Silverman got on Weekend Update with Kevin Nealon, she gave a "personal news" report, with a picture from her sister Susan's wedding in the background:

> Well, Kevin, I guess the most important event of this past week was, of course, the wedding of my sister, Susan Silverman, to Yosef Abramowitz. It was a really neat wedding, too, you know, 'cause they took each other's last names and hyphenated it. So now my sister's name is Susan Silverman-Abramowitz. But they're thinking of shortening it to just "Jews."

At the end of the season, Silverman was fired. Bob Odenkirk, who wrote for the show for several years, and got to know her doing standup in Los Angeles, says, "I could see how it wouldn't work at 'S.N.L.,' because she's got her own voice, she's very much Sarah Silverman all the time. She can play a character but she doesn't disappear into the character—she makes the character her. She doesn't really do character voices. She puts out stuff that she would appreciate and then you can like it or not—she doesn't give a shit."

In television roles over the years, Silverman has stayed within the parameters established by her standup and her life. On "The Larry Sanders Show" she played a television writer; on "Greg the Bunny" she was a TV executive. In the movie "School of Rock" she played an unsympathetic, self-absorbed perfectionist. In a pilot she co-wrote with Dan Harmon and Rob Schrab, and which is being filmed for Comedy Central this fall, she plays a character named Sarah Silverman. Her sister Laura plays her sister Laura; Duck, her Chihuahua-pug mix, plays Duck. Her own apartment is the set.

Ten years ago, when Silverman had recently moved to Los Angeles, she decided to try something conceptual in her standup routine. She took a pair of khaki pants, dabbed a tiny bit of red paint in the crotch, and wore them to a gig at a club called Largo. After telling jokes for five minutes, she started roaming around the stage, admonishing herself aloud for not using it to better advantage. She did a somersault, and heard a slight, mortified intake of breath. "I just thought it would be an experiment, interesting because the audience would think it was funny and also be dying for me," Silverman says. "Then I went back and did five more minutes of jokes, to see how it changed the room, how it was this elephant in the room." At the end of the set, she allowed herself to notice the stain, and said, wincing, "Did you guys—you, you must think that I have my period and you're probably dying for me. Of *course* you did. Why wouldn't you? No." She paused and said, as if to reassure, "I had anal sex for the first time tonight."

Silverman does standup a couple of times a week, usually at Largo or at the Hollywood Improv, a mainstream club. One night in August, before a ten-minute spot at Largo, she was coursing around with a creased scrap of paper covered in crossed-out bits. (Her set list is often a cocktail napkin scribbled with notations: "Kabbalah/Scientology," "9-11," "old deaf black people.") She was wearing a flowered peasant blouse, loose jeans, and sneakers. "I've got nothing," she said buoyantly. "I've got nothing." In the entrance of the club, Patton Oswalt, another comedian, was hunched over a small piano, working on his material. She came up behind him and pretended to spy on his notes; he leapt up and fake chased her, and she fake ran away, both of them jogging in place. "I have to pee again, but I don't think I have time," she said, and then it was her turn.

A few bars of music played while Silverman got herself to the microphone. Jimmy Kimmel stood against the wall and watched. "You know how a smell can take you to a place?" Silverman asked the room. "Like the other day I was in an elevator and it smelled just like my kindergarten. Jimmy's balls smell exactly like my nana's house." Kimmel, who has a steady, saturnine disposition, muttered "great" and rolled his eyes, but seemed secretly pleased. "Cigarettes and brisket," Silverman said from the stage. "God, I miss her. Or maybe Nana's house smelled like Jimmy's balls. Maybe that's how you know it's the one." She scanned the dark house, one hand visoring her eyes. "I'm sorry, Jimmy. Now he's going to withhold his tiny little penis from me. But it's all right, because he has really big balls." She finished, bounded off the stage, and found Kimmel. "I'm sorry!" she said, and they went to a grimy place next door to eat calzones.

"All standup acts are a riddle: Who am I?" Penn Jillette says. "When you're a woman doing that stuff, you're really walking a tightrope, because on one side you have, she's just using the fact that maybe we can fuck her to get laughs and that's cheap and that's easy, and then on the other side you have, she's telling us nothing about herself, she's trying to be a guy. You have to walk right down the middle. Sarah just does that." He says, "I really think that her sensibility—not her style—and her material and her ability to write and her timing would all work just as well if she looked like Gilbert Gottfried. And yet she doesn't in any way deny who she is. That's all you want."

Because Silverman is a comedian, she

doesn't like to dissect what she does. "Part of who I am onstage is a person who would say"—she put on a lofty voice—" 'Well, I'm the kind of person that is like this and like this and like this.' I'm interested in that kind of person, but I'm not that kind of person. It's an unreliable narrator. I do consciously do that. Something that I enjoy—so maybe I also create it—is contrast. People say I'm a nice girl saying terrible things. I tend to say the opposite of what I think. You hope that the absolute power of that transcends, and reaches the audience."

One afternoon at the end of August, Silverman was on the set of "Jimmy Kimmel Live," getting ready to shoot a sketch whose premise was that Comedy Central had asked her to fill in for the black comedian Dave Chappelle as the host of his show. (Chappelle had disappeared just as the season was supposed to begin.) She was going to impersonate Chappelle doing his impressions of black male characters like Rick James, "the King of Funk," and the rapper Lil Jon. In the wardrobe room, on the third floor of the old Hollywood theatre where the show is taped, Silverman put on a pair of pleated black leather pants and black platform boots: Rick James. "I feel so black. I'm sorry, but I do," she said. The stylist who was helping her, a black woman in a head scarf and sweats, grunted in amusement.

"I'm Rick James, bitch," Silverman said, rehearsing the line Chappelle uses for James. She put on an oversized red-and-black giraffe-print velour jacket and looked in the mirror. "I feel beautiful, though, still," she said, shrugging. "I feel like I'm going to Nell's. My best friend in New York was"—she whispered—"African-American. She used to take me there."

Silverman tried her line again, this time in an annoying, whiny voice. "I'm going to do that as whitely as possible," she said. She was fitted with a cornrow wig, with bangs and wooden beads, and went to the greenroom, which had been set up for a lounge scene. "Where my bitches at?" Silverman asked as she entered. There were two black women, in hoochie hot pants and fishnet tops, on a couch. "Hello, ladies," she said. A technician fired the smoke machine, and Silverman tried a take. "How was that?" she asked, before the first shot was over. "It's hard to figure out what's best. Do you want it to be more me?" She tried the next take purely as herself: "I'm Rick James!" she said, exuberant. After the camera had stopped, she realized, "I forgot to say 'bitch'!"

Back in the wardrobe room, Silverman put on the Lil Jon costume—a purple velour tracksuit. "You know who wears this?" she said. "Young black people and old Jews." She added a Yankee cap, a medallion in the shape of a hand grenade, and a pair of blue suède sneakers. "You know what it feels like?" she said, mainly to herself. "Home." A crew member had fashioned her a set of "crunk teeth," with rhinestones embedded in them. She sat down while he rolled a fixative between his fingers.

"It's going to taste like rubber," she said. "But at least it won't taste like your filthy hand." She peered at him. "What's your nationality?"

He remained focussed on his task and didn't look up. "My mother's Eastern European."

"Yuck."

"And my father's Irish and American Indian."

"Yeulch."

Kimmel's fourteen-year-old daughter, Katie, came in, wearing a school uniform.

"How was high school?" Silverman asked, through the crunk teeth.

"You look so ridiculous," the crew member said approvingly.

"You're ridiculous, you crazy Native American Irish Jew." He finally smiled.

A few years ago, Silverman was invited to tell some jokes on "Late Night with Conan O'Brien." In one of them, she describes trying to get out of jury duty by writing something disqualifyingly biased on the form. A friend suggests she write "I hate Chinks," and, worried that people will think she's racist, she writes, "I love Chinks." Before the taping, she says, she was told that she could say "spic" or "Jew" but not "Chink." She decided to say it anyway. "Jew would be funny if I wasn't Jewish," she says. "But it has to be offensive, it can't be a self-deprecating thing. Then I thought, If you're saying I can say spic, I'm going to say Chink, because it's a funnier-sounding word. You know? It's got the 'ch-' and the 'k-.' I needed the most offensive word I could use on television."

The network aired the joke uncensored, and Guy Aoki, of the Media Action Network for Asian Americans, an advocacy group, protested until the network apologized. Then Silverman and Aoki had a debate on Bill Maher's "Politically Incorrect." Aoki, who lives in an

THE BEGINNING OF SPEECH

That child I was came to me
once,
a strange face.
He said nothing. We walked,
each of us staring at the other in silence, our steps
a strange river running in between.

We were brought together by good manners
and these sheets now flying in the wind,
and we split.
A forest written by the earth,
watered by the seasons' change.

Child who once was, come forth!
What brings us together now,
and what do we have to say?

—Adonis

(*Translated, from the Arabic, by Khaled Mattawa.*)

apartment in Glendale littered with videotapes of programs he has monitored, arrived with, as he says, "two pages of sound bites" and a crowd of supporters. Silverman got frustrated—"It's not a racist joke," she said; "it's a joke about racism"—and called Aoki a "douche bag."

"It's stupid to ever, ever defend your material," she says now. "If you don't like it, then you know what? It's no good. It's subjective."

But opportunities for Silverman to justify her work continue to present themselves. One day this summer, she made an appearance on a Los Angeles morning radio show. A man phoned in, said that people thought of her as a "racist Jewish princess," and asked, "Why are you calling people Chinks on TV? You're a Jew."

"I don't just call people Chinks," Silverman said. "Who would do that? There was a context."

"Thanks, kike," the man said, and hung up. The producer erased the call, but when they went back on the air the host said, "A guy called up and he was a racist." Silverman corrected him: "He wasn't a racist. He was calling me a racist. He said— Can I say K-I-K-E?" The producer said, "You just did."

"But I *want* to say it," Silverman said. "It feels good."

"That kind of thing probably happens to me more than to an average person," she said, driving home. "It doesn't faze me. I don't get mad, I don't feel bad. I completely knew who that guy was. He was so excited to say that word."

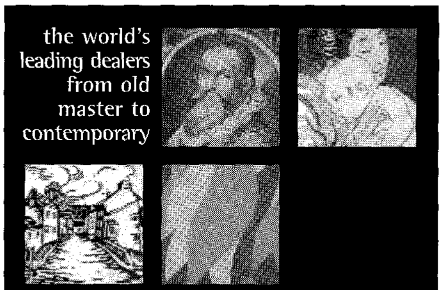
In September, Silverman took "Jesus Is Magic," the concert-movie version of a one-woman show she did Off Broadway a few years ago, to the Toronto Film Festival, where it was screened at midnight for a crowd of twelve hundred. The next night, there was a party for her at the Club Monaco on Bloor Street, in the fashion district. She arrived at ten-thirty, wearing a knee-length gray woollen skirt and high-heeled black loafers. She looked around uncomfortably and said she didn't know anyone. Strangers came up and introduced themselves ("Can I say hello? You're awesome. Come to our party. It's for a movie about queer hip-hop"), and photographers took pictures of her with festival notables. "This is a lot of attention," she said. "I want to walk around, but I'm afraid." In a downstairs room, set up for a poker tournament, an *Us Weekly* reporter asked her what was on her iPod, and a movie-theatre manager from Chicago told her that he and his workmates were recently talking about "scatting," and who they would let do this to them. "You were my choice," he said.

Silverman listened graciously, then found her way out to the street. She said she hadn't minded the obscene confession. "When he came up to me and said 'I want to tell you a story that might not be that flattering,' I was like, *Ugggh.* People want to hurt your feelings." Outside another première party, she was accosted by autograph collectors waving blank white sheets of paper for her to sign. (They would attach her head shot later.) They muttered among themselves: "Who is she?" "She's really nice." "What's she been in?" "The Pamela Anderson roast." "She's very funny, she really is." A young man in glasses, a red polo shirt, and a baseball cap called out to her, "I loved 'The Aristocrats,'" and asked for her autograph. There was a hint of malice in her outwardly game response. She signed, "Vagina Silverman."

"Jesus Is Magic," which comes out next month, contains Silverman's most authentic response to the accusation of racism. She says:

> I got in trouble for saying the word "Chink" on a talk show, a network talk show. It was in the context of a joke. Obviously. That'd be weird. That'd be a really bad career choice if it wasn't. But, nevertheless, the president of an Asian-American watchdog group out here in Los Angeles, his name is Guy Aoki, and he was up in arms about it and he put my name in the papers calling me a racist, and it hurt. As a Jew—as a member of the Jewish community—I was really concerned that we were losing control of the media. Right? What kind of a world do we live in where a totally cute white girl can't say "Chink" on network television? It's like the fifties. It's scary.
>
> There are only two Asian people that I know that I have any problem with, at all. One is, uh, Guy Aoki. The other is my friend Steve, who actually went pee-pee in my Coke. He's all, 'Me Chinese, me play joke.' Uh, if you have to explain it, Steve, it's not funny.

Backed up by a band she calls the Silvermen, she picks up a guitar and sings "A Love Song": "I love you more than bears love honey / I love you more than Jews love money / I love you more than Asians are good at math . . ." Later, she says, as if to put an end to it, "I don't care if you think I'm racist. I just want you to think I'm thin." ♦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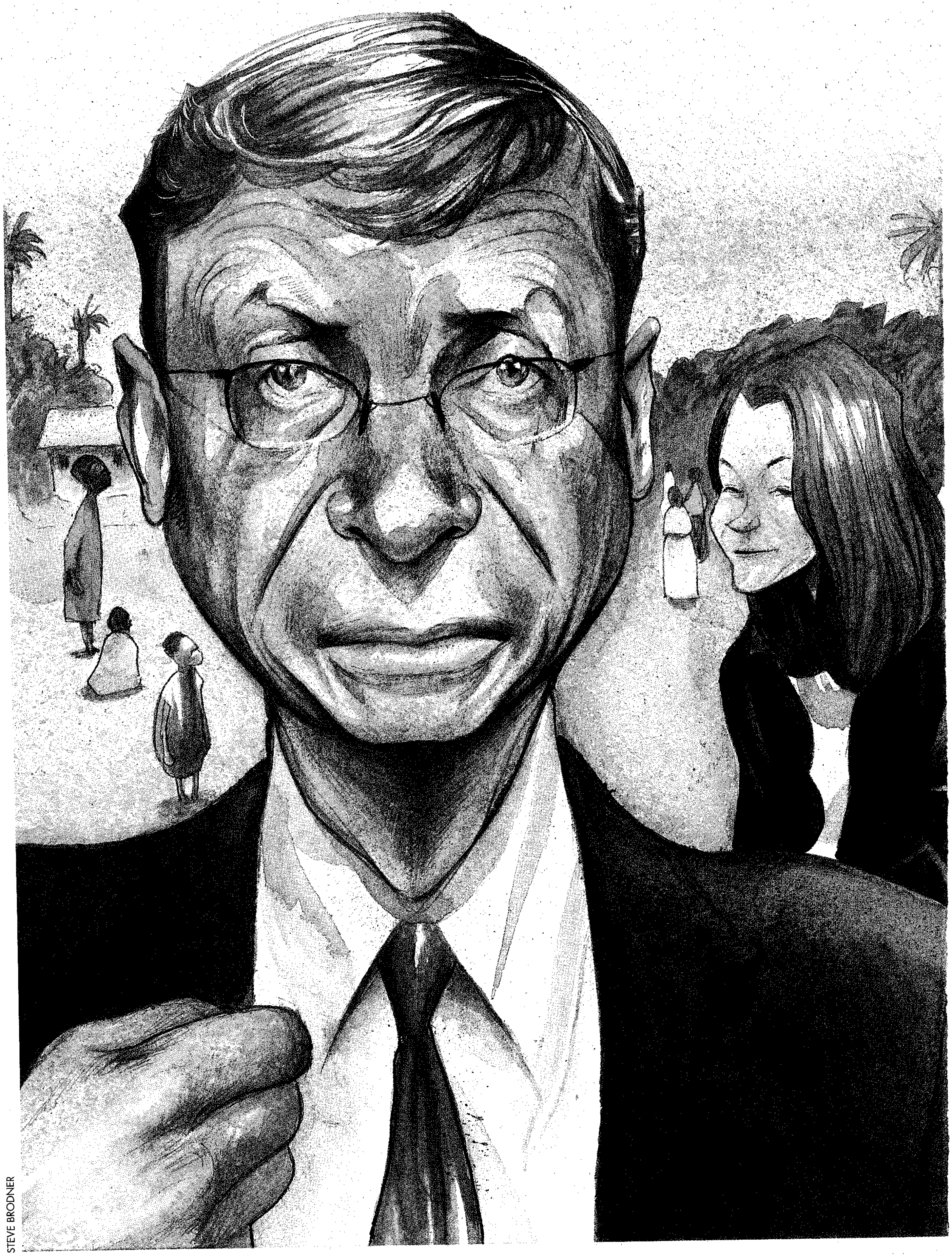

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

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Millions of Africans die needlessly of disease each year. Can Bill Gates change that?

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

Each May, representatives from the hundred and ninety-two member nations of the World Health Organization travel to Geneva to set policies for the coming year. The assembly lasts a week, and the delegates often find themselves devoting as much of that time to politics as they do to matters of life or death. This year, on the opening day, Elena Salgado, the assembly's president, spoke bluntly about the growing chasm between the "rich world," where people live in health and comfort, and everywhere else. The mortality rate for infants in the developing world is sixteen times greater than it is for infants in the West, she told the delegates. And at least one woman dies every minute from avoidable complications of pregnancy. Half of these deaths occur in Africa, where hundreds of millions of children, and almost as many adults, suffer needlessly from illnesses that most people in the West have never heard of. The W.H.O.'s director general, Lee Jong-wook, warned that even the modest health goals that the United Nations has established for the new millennium are unlikely to be met. In fact, he said, in many places death rates are rising.

The most anticipated speech—and the least diplomatic—also came on the first day: Bill Gates addressed the assembly in his role as the founder of the world's most powerful charity, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which he and his wife started five years ago. The foundation's endowment is nearly twenty-nine billion dollars—more than the gross domestic product of Tanzania—and its principal goal is simple: to rid the world of disease, particularly the many illnesses that are essentially ignored because they affect the world's poorest people. "Global health is our lifelong commitment," Gates told me that day. "Until we reduce the burden on the poor so that there is no real gap between us and them, that will always be our priority. I am not so foolish as to say that will happen. But that's our goal."

Gates had arrived from Seattle just after dawn, going directly to a breakfast with health ministers from ten African nations. It was a dismal day; rain pounded the gilt windows of the Palais des Nations, and the sky seemed heavy enough to touch the ground. The meeting was held in a room panelled in dark-green wood and filled with enormous mirrors. A buffet of coffee, tea, fruit, and doughnuts had been set out for the ministers. In front of Gates's seat, there was a Diet Coke and a plastic cup. When Gates entered, the ministers started to clap. Gates bowed his head, winced, and sat down. "I know your jobs are super, super important," he told them. "And I am excited about the progress that can be made for the health of your people." He looked tired, and seemed slight in a mauve shirt and gray business suit. One by one, the ministers told him their troubles. "In Nigeria, the health system simply doesn't work," Eyitayo Lambo, the country's health minister, said. His counterpart from Botswana, Sheila Tlou, echoed those thoughts. "H.I.V. and malaria have dismantled our country," she said. "We need help just to get back to where we were." The other ministers told similar stories. Tuberculosis, H.I.V., and malaria were rampant, as were lymphatic filariasis, schistosomiasis, river blindness, and other, even less well-known diseases. Each person began and ended by thanking Gates; in January, the foundation had contributed seven hundred and fifty million dollars to the

"This isn't about compassion. It's about results," Bono said of Gates's project. "When Bill walks into the room, we are not expecting to have a nice warm fuzzy feeling."

"Don't you just love that new cat smell?"

U.N.'s Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunization, to fight easily preventable diseases, like diphtheria, whooping cough, and measles. (Gates had also provided funds to vaccinate forty-two million children against hepatitis B.) The ministers thanked Gates for helping to promote a safe, cheap drug for visceral leishmaniasis (a malaria-like disease that affects nearly half a million people a year), for investing in the first seemingly effective new drug for sleeping sickness in fifty years, and for supporting research into a vaccine for pneumonia that could reduce African deaths by fifteen per cent.

Two days earlier, the *Tribune* of Geneva had run an article headlined "THE HEALTH OF THE WORLD DEPENDS MORE ON BILL GATES THAN ON THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION." Few of those at the assembly could disagree. The annual budget of the W.H.O. is $1.65 billion. Since 2000, the Gates foundation has spent six billion dollars to address health issues in the Third World—more than nearly every contributing nation, and far more than any other charity. This time, Gates arrived in Geneva with a check for two hundred and fifty million dollars, to help pay for the foundation's most ambitious venture yet: the Grand Challenges, a series of fourteen fundamental obstacles to scientific progress which, if solved, would lead to dramatic improvements in the health of the world. The challenges, which include goals like developing vaccines that require no needles or refrigeration, were first issued in 2003 (along with a two-hundred-million-dollar grant), and a thousand scientists from seventy-five countries responded with proposals.

It would be hard to overstate the impact that the Gates foundation has had: the research programs of entire countries have been restored, and fields that had languished for years, like tropical medicine, have once again burst to life. In a world where a fast reaction to the threat of disease is imperative, bureaucracies like the W.H.O.—which make decisions by consensus—are often too cumbersome to compete at the speed of a mutating virus. Gates and his wife need consensus only between themselves. At times, the foundation appears as brazen as Gates has always been at Microsoft, which he started thirty years ago, and where his combative style has made him one of the most polarizing figures in the history of American business. "Bill and Melinda don't believe in half measures," Richard Klausner, the former head of the National Cancer Institute, who is the foundation's director of global health, told me. "Every time we get a grant proposal, we ask what fraction of the problem will be solved by this work. Always. And if there is no answer there is no grant." The rock star and anti-poverty evangelist Bono put it another way: "This isn't about compassion. It's about results. It's not some sort of well-meaning-hippie stuff. Bill Gates is not into nice sentimental efforts or whimsical support of hopeless causes. When Bill walks into the room, we are not expecting to have a nice warm fuzzy feeling."

Gates was scheduled to address the assembly at 3 P.M. First, however, there were some politics to endure. While he and I sat in a conference room on the second floor of the Palais, the delegates below were bogged down, for the eighth straight year, in hours of bickering over whether Taiwan could take part in the meeting. The country was not even seeking the right to vote—just to observe. Taiwan has always been a center of influenza—including the current epidemic of bird flu—and played a role in the rapid spread of SARS in 2003. It is not recognized by the United Nations, however, and there was never any chance that the request would be approved. Lofty goals are often set in Geneva—on H.I.V., polio (an effort now heavily underwritten by the Gates foundation), maternal health, and malaria, for example—but they are rarely met.

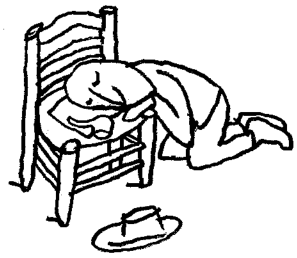
Malaria, the world's most prevalent parasitic disease, kills as many as three million people every year—almost all of whom are under five, desperately poor, and African. In most years, more than five hundred million cases of illness can be attributed to the disease, although exact numbers are difficult to assess because many people don't (or can't) seek care. It is not unusual for a family earning less than two hundred dollars a year to spend a quarter of its income on malaria treatment, and what they often get no longer works. In countries like Tanzania, Mozambique, and the Gambia, no family, village, hospital, or workplace can remain unaffected for long. Malaria governs their lives. "It just blows my mind how little money has been spent on malaria research," Gates told me as we were waiting for the Taiwan debate to end. "What has prevented the rich world from attempting this? I just keep asking myself, Do we really not care because it doesn't affect us? Is that what it is?" Gates looked grim but went on. "Human suffering as a result of malaria is incomparable. By many measures, it's easily the worst thing on the planet." When Gates gets animated, his voice starts to slide in unexpected directions, and so does he. By the end of our conversation, he was talking in bursts and rocking back and forth in his chair. "I refuse to accept it," he told me. "I refuse to sit there and say, O.K., next problem, this one doesn't bother me. It *does* bother me. Very much. And the only way for that to change is to stop malaria. So that is what we are going to have to do."

There has never been a time when malaria has not been a major global health problem; its symptoms have been reported for thousands of years. Only the plague—and, perhaps soon, H.I.V.—has influenced the demographic and geographical history of humans more. Malaria had become widely recognized in Greece by the fourth century B.C., and was responsible for the decline of many of the city-state populations that were then at the center of the world. Treatment and cures have been sought for millennia. The Chinese qing hao plant—which today is the source of the most promising antimalarial drug, artemisinin—was first described, more than two thousand years ago, in a medical treatise called "Fifty-two Remedies," discovered in the Mawangdui tombs, in Hunan province. The Centers for Disease Control was founded in Atlanta, not Washington, at the end of the Second World War largely because its initial mission was to control malaria, which remained a significant problem in the southern United States and in Europe throughout the nineteen-forties; malaria was particularly severe in the Mediterranean. It was malarial infections, more than war wounds or any other cause, that prevented Allied soldiers from fighting in the Italian campaign during 1943.

Malaria starts suddenly, with violent chills, which are soon followed by an intense fever and, often, disabling headaches, convulsions, and delirium. As the parasites multiply, they take over the entire body. Anemia is common, because malaria parasites live by eating the red blood cells they infect; they can also attach themselves to blood vessels in the brain. If it doesn't kill you, malaria can recur for years. The disease is transmitted to humans by female anopheles mosquitoes infected with one of four species of a parasite called plasmodium; by far the most dangerous of the four is *Plasmodium falciparum*. It is also the most prevalent. Together, the mosquito and falciparum are the most deadly couple in the history of the earth—and one of the most successful. A virus like measles, polio, or even H.I.V. consists of just a few genes. Malaria has five thousand genes, and its ability to mutate rapidly to defend itself and evade new drugs has made it nearly impossible to control. It wasn't until the eighteen-nineties that Ronald Ross, a British physician working in the Indian Medical Service in Hyderabad, discovered that malaria was transmitted by mosquitoes.

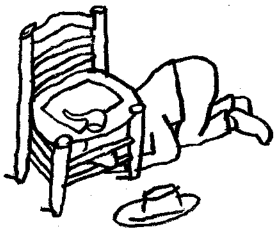
After the Second World War, malaria-control campaigns were initiated in many countries, and with the notable help of the insecticide DDT successes were striking. Malaria was eradicated from the United States in 1951; like measles, polio, and other illnesses that no longer threaten us, it is completely unknown to children and largely forgotten by adults. We tend to think of malaria, if at all, as something distant and exotic, like the British Raj, which suffered so badly from it—a malady that required a stiff upper lip and the quinine that comes in a gin-and-tonic. The World Health Organization sought to eliminate malaria even before it attempted to eradicate smallpox. The nineteen-fifties was an era of particular confidence in the power of medicine; a new polio vaccine had been discovered, and so had antibiotics. In countries like South Africa, Sri Lanka, and Mozambique, after extensive spraying, malaria had almost vanished. India brought the number of cases down from seventy-five million in 1951 to around fifty thousand in 1961. Large swaths of the disease in Southeast Asia were also on the brink of eradication. Yet by the late nineteen-sixties the success had come to a halt. DDT was seen as devastating to wildlife, and mosquitoes had begun to grow resistant to it. (Many subsequent studies have shown, however, that the insecticide is not as dangerous to the environment when used sparingly.) The United States banned DDT in 1972, and other developed countries followed. In most of Africa and Asia, where malaria efforts have always been funded by the West, the pesticide became politically unacceptable. Six years after Sri Lanka stopped using it, the number of cases rose from seventeen to more than half a million. By that time, though, malaria had essentially been banished from the developed world, and with it any incentive for continued research.

Less than ten per cent of all investment in health research is devoted to the diseases that affect ninety per cent of the world. To address this imbalance, in 2002 the U.N. created the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. Richard Feachem, the fund's director, is a professor of public health at Berkeley; he founded the Institute for Global Health, and he once served as dean of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, which has always been the world's most important center for malaria research. Feachem dresses in tweeds, and has graying hair and a thin, oval face; glasses dangle from a cord around his neck. Despite his current role, he retains the dispassionate manner of a scholar; he understands politics, but worries that too many people have begun to ignore history. "In the first year I had this job, malaria was never mentioned," he told me in Geneva. "In the origins of the fund, the momentum was entirely about H.I.V. Malaria was an afterthought."



At an annual cost of twelve billion

dollars, however, malaria is responsible for almost forty per cent of public-health spending in Africa. Poverty cannot be addressed unless malaria is, too. And the attempt to end poverty has gained great currency in the past two years. Last December, Gordon Brown, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, promised that his country would purchase hundreds of millions of doses of any successful vaccine—thus providing incentive for investment which pharmaceutical companies had always lacked. In June, the Gates foundation, which had already donated more than a hundred and fifty million dollars for malaria research, announced a new round of global health grants, worth more than four hundred million dollars. A few days after the Gates announcement, President Bush pledged more than $1.2 billion to fight malaria in Africa over the next five years, by expanding access to remedies that already exist and that are known to work: mosquito nets treated with long-lasting insecticide, indoor spraying, and the distribution of effective medicines, such as the therapies that include artemisinin. (Bush has announced such initiatives before—and then failed to fulfill them. Much of the money has simply been shifted from other commitments.)



"There have been great moments of optimism in the past, too," Feachem told me, "but there has always been this sense of malaria fatalism. There has been the idea that this is just part of Africa and being African." For much of the past twenty years, Feachem said, political leaders throughout the world have been waiting for a vaccine to appear as if by magic. "It is a moral outrage. This is an utterly preventable holocaust, and the numbers are far higher than the W.H.O. says. They have put the dead at one million for years, and now it is really three million in terms of deaths to which malaria might have contributed. So I don't think it's yet the time to break out the champagne. You have to remember we almost eradicated malaria before. And what has happened? Not only have we failed but by any reasonable measure more people have suffered from malaria in the past fifty years than in the history of mankind. It has been a remarkable march backward."

In most parts of the world, malaria parasites have become resistant to chloroquine, which had been the first-choice treatment in Africa for decades. Chloroquine, a synthetic chemical similar to quinine, costs only fifteen cents a dose, and is easy to make. Sulfidoxine-pyrimethamine, or SP—the second-choice treatment—has also failed widely. The only consistently successful alternatives are the artemisinin-based combination therapies—a mixture of drugs helps prevent resistance—but they have been in short supply and are ten times as expensive as treatment with chloroquine. If those drugs should fail, nobody knows what would come next. "The problem is getting worse in many ways," Feachem said. Studies consistently show that mosquitoes are transmitting the virus more frequently. There are also more breeding sites, denser populations in affected areas, and higher death rates owing to drug resistance. "We are seeing more urban outbreaks in countries like India," Feachem continued. "We are seeing other, more ominous signs, too. Malaria has become endemic at altitudes where it never used to occur. Some of that may be because the mosquitoes are adapting, but most of it is simply a result of human population density—people living where they never used to live." (Some of the disease's spread, too, can be attributed to global warming, as mosquitoes migrate to newly temperate areas.)

Fifty per cent of the world's population is regularly exposed to malaria—an increase of almost ten per cent in the past decade. When the parasite returns to a place where success had been dramatic, as was the case with Sri Lanka in the sixties, the consequences can be particularly devastating. In such populations, because they have never been exposed, most people simply lack the protective antibodies required to bolster their immune systems. It took the republics of the former Soviet Union fifty years to eradicate malaria, but only five years for the parasite to return in force. It will take many years to eradicate it again. Resistance to drugs and pesticides has become far more widespread in the past decade, and many public-health systems in the Third World have broken down completely. African governments, faced with the staggering burden of H.I.V. (which not only increases susceptibility to malaria but places impossible demands on services and medical personnel) and often civil conflict as well, continue to grow poorer, and their people become sicker.

In 2000, all fifty-three African chiefs of state met in Abuja, Nigeria, and issued a document known as the Abuja Declaration, in which they pledged to halve malaria mortality and disability by 2010. Today, more people are sick and dying than before. "The mistake was not in putting out the targets," Allan Schapira, a policy coördinator at Roll Back Malaria, which was created by the U.N. in 1998, told me. "The mistake was in not putting the hammer down to make it happen." But that would have required about three billion dollars a year. "The economic conditions of the industrial world are better than at any other time in history," Schapira said. "Affluence is much greater. People should have strong pangs of conscience." New money has been committed—for drugs and research. Scientific prospects appear genuinely promising; but excessive confidence has derailed efforts to overcome malaria before. And some people feel that if there is no victory this time, the defeat will be even more difficult to overcome.

"There is one sad fact about the malaria community," Kent Campbell, a former chief of the malaria branch at the Centers for Disease Control, told me. "We have always been so wedded to failure that we don't even have the leadership necessary to risk the additional failure to get where we need to be. This would cost two or three dollars a person." He was referring to treatment and prevention services for Africans. "It has gone on for too long. I would love to believe that in the United States this effort is being driven by a decent desire to help, but I don't think most Americans give a rat's ass about the death of millions of African kids each year. I don't think they ever have."

Tuele Hospital sits on a low hill in the Muheza District of Tanzania, halfway between Mt. Kilimanjaro and Dar es Salaam. Much of the coastal plain is given over to plantations of sisal and coconut. The roads are rutted and made of dirt, and along the sides women in brightly colored caftans gather to sell cashews, charcoal, bananas, cellular-phone cards, old tires, and bowls full of a small green fruit that looks like a lime and tastes like a mango. The rains were late this year, delaying the worst of the malaria season, but the dry weather hurt the crops. Everyone in this part of Tanzania raises some vegetable or fruit. Nobody could survive without them.

The day I arrived, this spring, the rain came down in torrents. Forests around Muheza have been cleared in many places in the past decade, which makes it an ideal breeding ground for the anopheles mosquito. Malaria is already Tanzania's leading communicable disease. The likelihood of getting sick is influenced by the number of infectious bites any person receives in a year, which is known as the entomological inoculation rate, or E.I.R.—the basic yardstick for transmission. Tanzania has a uniquely wide spread; E.I.R.s ranging from less than one to more than a thousand infectious bites per person have been documented. In the region near Tanga—Muheza lies just forty kilometres to the west—people are bitten by an infected mosquito an average of seven hundred times a year (about twice each night). That is among the highest rates of malarial exposure in the world.

At the Tuele hospital, which has two hundred and sixty-five beds and serves a district of three hundred thousand people, malaria accounts for more than half of all admissions. In the dry season, there are often two people in a single bed; when the rains get heavy, there are two to a bed and two or three lying on the floor between the beds. Tanzania spends four dollars per person on health care each year, and with that sum doctors confront an almost epic range of maladies: river blindness, rotavirus (the most common cause of diarrhea in children, responsible for more than six hundred thousand deaths a year), elephantiasis, and sleeping sickness are all relatively common. So are measles and pneumonia. But none of those diseases are as destructive as H.I.V. or malaria. The infant-mortality rate in Muheza is a hundred and thirty-three per thousand births, far higher than the national average of slightly more than a hundred per thousand. (In Europe, the average figure is about five per thousand.) The malaria burden is harsh in terms of death, but it goes far beyond that. Sick people can't work or take care of their families. When one child is dying of malaria, a mother is often forced to ignore the others.

T. K. Mutabingwa, a gruff man in his fifties who holds a tenured position at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, has watched children die nearly every day of his adult life. He is one of Africa's most prominent malaria researchers and has been working at Tuele for more than twenty-five years. "My Ph.D. was a study that showed chloroquine was doing nothing for pregnant women," he told me. "That was many years before the government tried to switch to other drugs. Perhaps they didn't read it." Since the early nineteen-eighties, Mutabingwa has been trying to find the most effective and least intrusive therapies for mothers and children. One of the genuine mysteries about malaria—and one of the greatest opportunities for researchers—is how people develop immunity. When a bite from a mosquito infected with falciparum doesn't make you sick, it acts like an inoculation; that's why children who survive to the age of five are much less likely to die. Adults in Africa may get very sick, but the disease rarely kills them. Pregnant women, however, are an exception. The first time a woman becomes pregnant, she is highly susceptible to malaria; in subsequent pregnancies, the risk is lower. For years, epidemiologists had assumed that pregnancy simply weakened the immune system.

"That didn't make complete sense, of course," Mutabingwa told me. "Why would these same women do better in the second pregnancy? And even better in the third? Those weaken your immune system, too." Ten years ago, Patrick Duffy, of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, and Michal Fried, from the Seattle Biomedical Research Institute, both colleagues of Mutabingwa, discovered that a distinct form of the falciparum parasite binds to a specific receptor on the placenta. The first time a woman becomes pregnant, if the parasite latches onto those receptors, she has no defenses. After that, however, her immune system learns to recognize the parasite and makes antibodies that provide at least some protection. The discovery has immense implications both for drug treatment and for the development of a vaccine: if those antibodies can be reproduced successfully, they may be able

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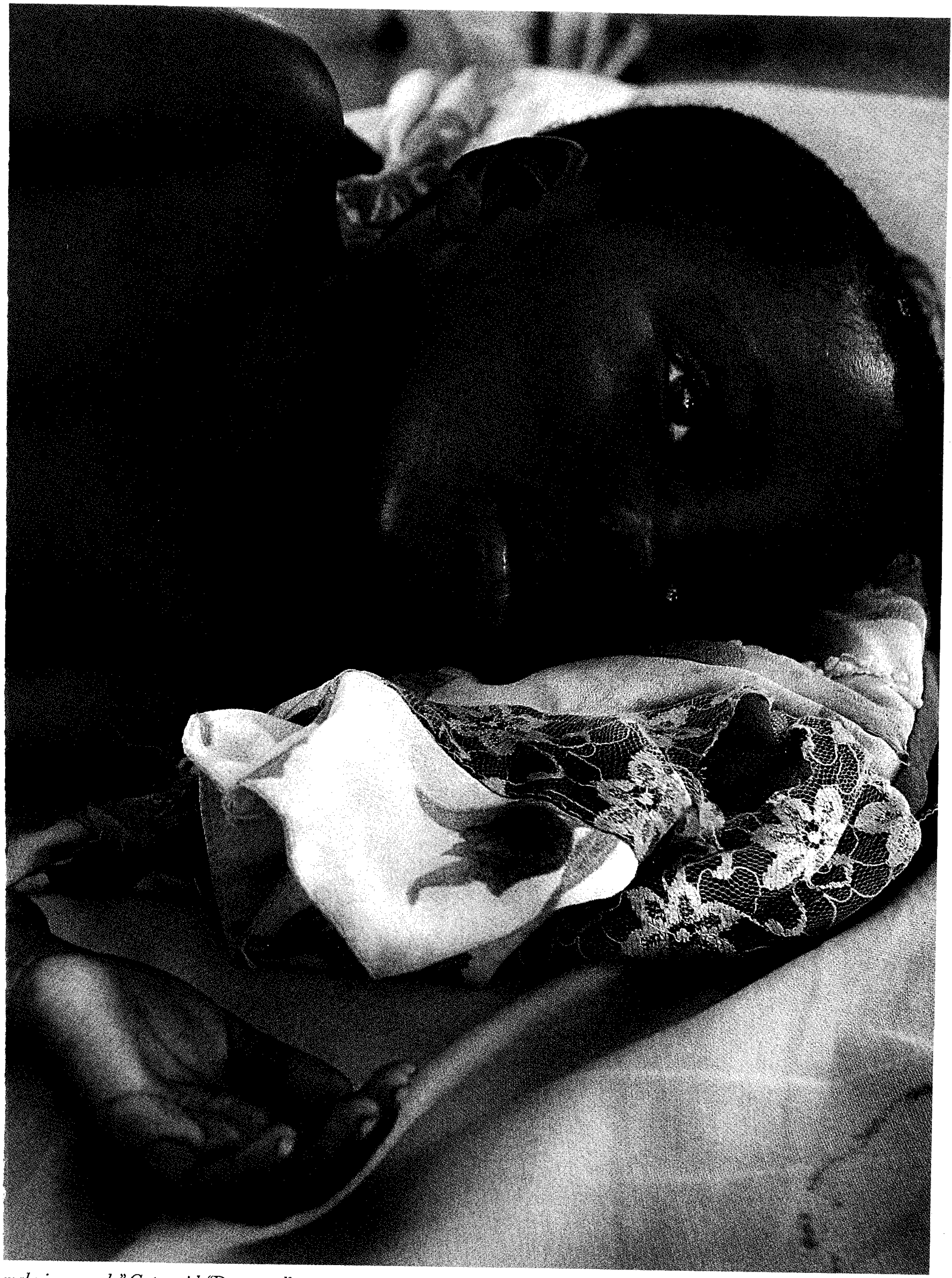
to protect women even before they become pregnant.

Mutabingwa offered to show me around the hospital. Women dressed in robes, their heads obscured by flowing scarves, lined a long, low breezeway connecting the main wards. Each woman had at least one child, bundled in swaddling, sitting by her feet, or nursing. None of them cried; the children seemed like statues while their mothers waited wordlessly to see a nurse. Nearly half of the adults in the hospital have H.I.V., Mutabingwa said, and almost all the children have malaria. A considerable number have both. We entered the women's ward, where electric-blue mosquito nets hung in cones over every bed. The hospital is often the only place in which a woman will have the use of a net. One mother had just arrived from a village nearby, after a ten-kilometre bus ride over a series of craters that serve as a road. She was covered in dust and wrapped like a mummy. In her arms she cradled a seemingly lifeless child; malaria had made the baby severely anemic. Two feet away, a three-year-old boy with an I.V. tube in his hand lay on a gurney, screaming over and over, "*Mkono wangu! Mkono wangu!*" ("My hand! My hand!") "At times, you get to a clinic and they don't have cups for water," Mutabingwa said. The boy was one of the lucky children who had made it to the hospital before lapsing into a coma.

"You know, if you do this for a while the danger is not to care," Mutabingwa said. We walked over to the combined H.I.V. and chronic-tuberculosis ward (there is neither space nor money to separate them). A single fluorescent bulb cast an eerie glow across the room. Every bed was occupied, some by more than one person. H.I.V., tuberculosis, and malaria (which together kill five million people a year) fuel each other. Anybody with one is far more likely to fall prey to either of the others. "These women are here because of acute malaria," Mutabingwa said. "After five or seven days, they are usually released. There is not that much we can do for them after that." We headed back toward the women's ward. A young woman, about sixteen, was sharing a bed with another woman, a few years older. A baby with malaria lay between

A Tanzanian girl, sick with malaria. "It just blows my mind how little money has been s



malaria research," Gates said. "Do we really not care because it doesn't affect us? Is that what it is?" Photograph by Samantha Appleton.

them. The two women were sisters, and the older one was visiting. She had tuberculosis. Mutabingwa could not conceal his irritation. "This is not infection control!" he cried out to nobody in particular. "It is really very dangerous for her to be here." The older woman shrugged, got out of bed, and left.

While I was in Tanzania, I stopped at villages near Tanga, on the eastern coast, and, with the help of my driver, spoke to people there. When the subject turned to malaria, the sense of futility was pervasive. "We don't have the kind of money you need for nets," one mother told me. Nets, which are remarkably effective, cost about four dollars and must be treated regularly with insecticide. "My husband doesn't think it's worth the expense," the woman said. Mosquitoes almost always feed at night, yet only two per cent of the children and women in Tanzania sleep under nets or live in homes that have been sprayed with insecticide. At Tuele, I asked several women if they had bed nets—and all said no.

Later that day, I went to visit Stephen Magesa, an entomologist with Tanzania's National Institute for Medical Research. Magesa has spent most of his career assessing the effectiveness of bed nets that have been impregnated with insecticide. "In 1991, we showed that even in very intense areas of transmission we could reduce the burden," he said. Magesa is a quiet, donnish man. He spoke deliberately but without emotion. "The study was not big enough to show an impact on mortality. But we did show very clearly that the mosquitoes did not survive." More important, the researchers found benefits even for those people who did become infected: they had fewer parasites in their blood and less severe fevers. "We know the nets work. We have known it for almost twenty years," Magesa said.

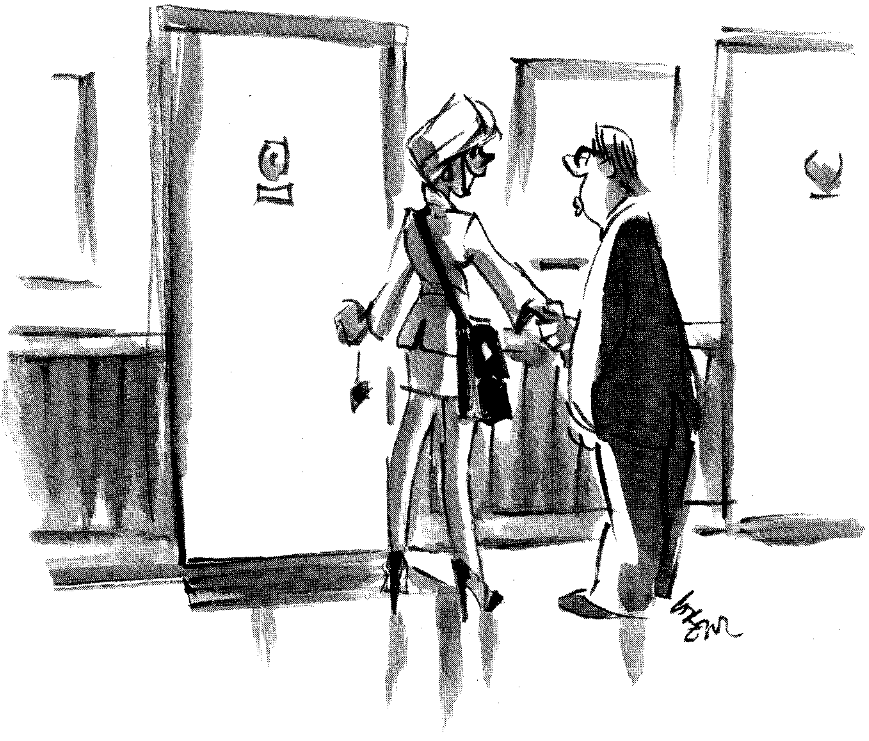
Actually, people have been using nets to protect themselves from mosquitoes for more than two thousand years. Herodotus described Egyptians living in marshy areas who would wrap themselves in fishing nets. In the nineteenth century, British colonists in India routinely slept under nets to stave off bites. (At that time, nobody knew what caused malaria.) It turns out that you don't even have to sleep under a net for it to protect you. In one study, in Ghana, child mortality increased by seven per cent for every hundred metres that children were away from nets; other research, in Kenya, has demonstrated that death rates, the incidence of anemia, and even the level of parasites in the bloodstream were lowered in children who lived within three hundred metres of houses that had nets.

Bed nets do require attention. They must be properly installed, used regularly, and treated with insecticide every six to twelve months. And although the four dollars they cost would be money well spent for even the poorest family, African governments have never made much of an effort to help. In 2003, fewer that five per cent of children living in sub-Saharan Africa slept under nets. New technology should change that. Several companies have begun to manufacture nets that have insecticide embedded within their fibres. They don't need to be sprayed and they last for nearly five years—the years that are crucial for infants and young children.

Magesa's arguments have long been ignored. "I am sitting here watching my hair go gray and waiting for those nets," he told me as we sipped iced tea in his cramped office. "Every year, a million more kids die. A decade ago, they were saying, 'Let people die; there is nothing we can do.' Then Gates came along and he said this is not acceptable. That was more important than his money. He put malaria back on the world's stage. But will he be able to keep it there?

"We are watching children die—our children—and they die every day," Magesa said. "You could save between thirty and fifty per cent of them with nets alone. If you added improved hospital services and proper medicine, you could save eighty per cent. But we already know how much eight hundred thousand African children are worth to the rich world. We have known it for a long time."

One afternoon, early in August, I met Bill and Melinda Gates for dinner at the home of the foundation's president and co-chair, Patty Stonesifer, who lives with her husband, the journalist Michael Kinsley, on the prosperous shores of Lake Washington. Their house sits directly across from the technological Xanadu occupied by Gates, Melinda, and their three children. As I stood on the dock staring at the sailboats dotting the water, I noticed a small motorboat heading our



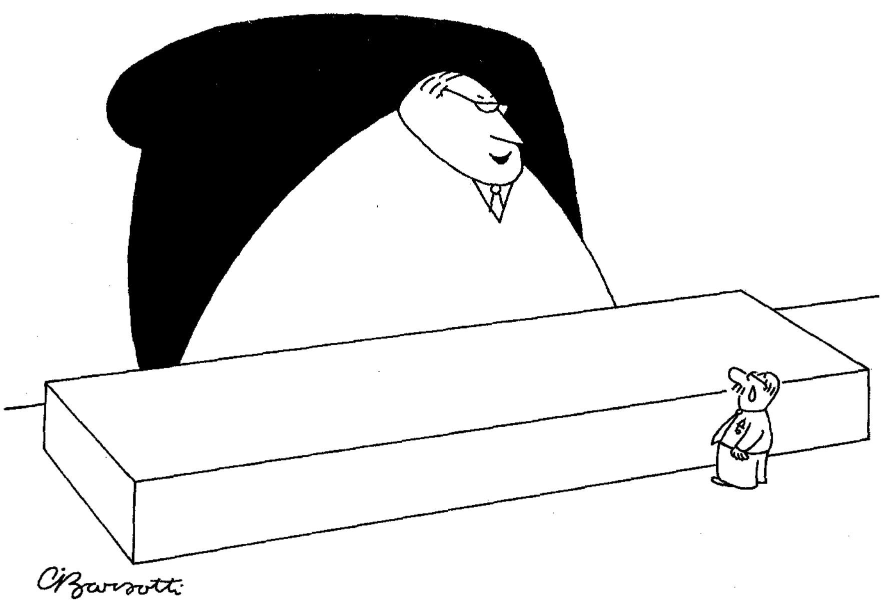
"That was great, Howard. The perfect antidote to mindless summer fare."

way. Bill Gates was behind the wheel, with Melinda acting as navigator. When it seemed as though they were going to glide into the dock, they cut the engine, drifted in, and tied up. Gates was dressed in a T-shirt, a Polartec sweater, and khakis. He looked as if his most recent haircut had been performed with blunt scissors and a soup bowl. Melinda was dressed casually in a sweater set and black pants. She is athletic, and one could not help contrasting her tan with the definitive pastiness of her husband.

The Gates foundation—while run by Stonesifer, chaired by Gates's father, and founded by both Bill and Melinda Gates—has been portrayed largely as the expression of one man's obsession. That turns out to be untrue. Stonesifer is close to both founders, and she has been with the philanthropy since the planning stages. Gates and his wife sign off on all grants larger than ten million dollars, but Stonesifer is responsible for hiring staff and managing the foundation. After working at Microsoft for nine years, becoming its highest-ranking female executive, she retired in 1996. She had become very wealthy, and takes no salary from the foundation. Stonesifer is not particularly fond of publicity; she is utterly frank, but prefers to work behind the scenes. At times, her lack of pretense leads her to be underestimated. But not by Gates. "If this foundation works, it's because of Patty," he told me. "She is one of the best managers I have ever known."

In addition to its work on public health, the foundation has chosen to support libraries, education, and the underprivileged. By most measures, the grants and the commitment in those areas are enormous: so far, the foundation has made nearly $2.5 billion worth of educational awards; eight hundred million dollars more has been allocated to programs in the Pacific Northwest, where Gates has spent his life. They are each dwarfed, however, by the investment in public health. The Gates foundation has more than vast wealth: it has the power of a government without actually being bound by a nation's political or economic constraints. "We are in this unusual position where we can spend one hundred million dollars on something we think might work and it can fail and nobody gets fired" was the way Gates described it to me. "Political institutions just can't handle risks like that." The foundation has drawn liberally from America's leading medical institutions: in addition to Klausner, who will leave next month to pursue a private venture, Regina Rabinovitch, who was hired from the Malaria Vaccine Initiative, directs the infectious-disease program; Helene Gayle, who is in charge of the foundation's H.I.V., TB, and reproductive-health programs, is one of the most visible black women in American science. There are at least a dozen other similarly experienced and sought-after scientists on the staff.

Bill Gates has always had an interest in science. Yet it was Melinda who first suggested that they concentrate on global health. Gates didn't get it: he was interested in population control and thought that improving the world's health might even run counter to that goal. ("It was only when I dug into it a bit that I came to understand that better health leads to lower populations with more resources," he said.) Melinda French grew up in Dallas. She studied economics and computer science at Duke and stayed to earn an M.B.A. She joined Microsoft in 1987, helping to develop such products as Encarta, Expedia, and Cinemania, and she ran a division that produced several hundred million dollars in annual sales. The two were married in 1994, and Melinda left the company two years later, when their first child was born. Gates owns more than a billion shares of Microsoft, which at times have been worth as much as a hundred billion dollars. Today, after his contributions to the foundation, his net worth stands at roughly half that amount. "We knew that we wanted to give virtually all of it away instead of having it go to our kids," he said. "But we certainly thought that it would happen when I wasn't working full time at Microsoft."



"You understand, Wilkens, I have yachts, cars, planes, and women, so I'm not firing you just for the fun of it."

• •

On the eve of their wedding, Gates's mother wrote a letter to Melinda in which she stressed the great opportunities the two would have as a couple to improve the world—and the unique responsibilities that came with immense wealth. "It was really quite beautiful," Melinda said. "And that was what got us going." Their interest in population control led them to look more deeply into public health, and the realization that diarrhea, respiratory diseases, and other syndromes were killing millions of people every year. "The whole thing was stunning to us," Gates said. "We couldn't even believe it. You think in philanthropy that your dollars will just be marginal, because the really juicy obvious things will all have been taken. So you look at this stuff and we are, like, *wow!* When somebody is saying to you we can save many lives for hundreds of dollars each, the answer has to be no, no, no. That would already have been done." Gates's voice rose as he talked. In the background, a seaplane swooped down onto the lake. "We go to events where people are raising money for various illnesses where lives are being treated as if they were worth many millions of dollars. And here we were learning that you can save even more lives for a few hundred each. We really did think it was too shocking to be true."

Gates began to approach scientists for advice. One of them, William Foege, is a former director of the C.D.C. and one of the country's most experienced public-health officials. I ran into Foege not long ago and asked him about his first encounters with Gates. He laughed and said, "The guy came to me and said he wanted to learn about public health and he wanted to help. Do you know how many times before I have heard those sorts of things? Rich people say that all the time. I gave him a list of eighty-two books. I saw him a couple of months after that and I asked, 'How are you doing on those books?' And he said, 'Well, I have been so damn busy I have read only nineteen of them.' I still didn't know whether to believe him, so I asked, 'Which was your favorite?' He didn't hesitate for a second. 'That 1993 World Bank report was just super,' he told me. 'I read it twice.'" By then, Foege had signed on as an adviser to the foundation. He now splits his time between Seattle and Atlanta.

The 1993 World Bank Development Report helped change the way public-health officials calculate the relationship between disability and the value of life. In the report, for the first time, bank economists focussed on the concept of the "disability-adjusted life year" (DALY), which has come to serve as the standard measure of how to assess the burden of a disease. In the past, the impact of any illness—cancer, the common cold, and everything in between—was usually evaluated on the basis of how likely it was to kill you. But life without good health also carries enormous costs for individuals, families, and societies. The disability-adjusted life year combines years of potential life lost owing to premature death with years of productive life lost to disability. Blindness is an example of a health problem that, while not causing death, can dramatically reduce one's quality of life or ability to function within society. Alzheimer's disease is another.

Even so, the World Bank report, at three hundred and twenty-nine pages, makes for some dry reading. When I asked Gates if he had indeed read it twice, he replied, "I've read it more than twice. It's really a nice piece of work." The DALY concept led Gates and his wife to their first large grant, a hundred and twenty-five million dollars, for the Children's Vaccine Program. They refer to that grant as "the 125." "That led to the 750," Melinda added, an initial seven-hundred-and-fifty-million-dollar donation to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, which they matched this year. "After the 125, we had a dinner for about a dozen scientists at the house," Melinda went on. "We were both extraordinarily impressed with their knowledge, their expertise, their desire to solve problems. And toward the end of the dinner Bill posed the question: 'If you had more money, what would you do?' and the room came alive. Just to hear what their ideas were was so exciting for us. It was a revelation. And we both walked away from that dinner thrilled, because we had been surrounded by people that were so brilliant at Microsoft. And we saw immediately that these were the same type of people."

The National Institutes of Health helps pay for most of the basic biomedical research carried out in the United States, but it does not produce drugs or vaccines. That has always been a job for pharmaceutical companies, which, like any business, concentrate on creating products that people will buy. There is almost no financial incentive to make a vaccine for malaria; the West doesn't need it. African children don't lobby Congress; they have no money, and neither do the countries they live in. Philanthropy has not filled the gap. "I always say to people with a lot of money, 'Do you want a disease?'" Gates said. "'We can give you this whole disease, or a whole region or a country. Whatever you want.'" He went on, "We heard again and again this recitation of places where all this great work had occurred and then it would just get stalled. There was just nobody to push it to the next level. It's all the greater crime that something like malaria never got more attention. We gave a small grant at first, like thirty million dollars, and everybody said, 'Wow! That is the greatest increase in nongovernment spending in the history of malaria research!' And I thought, Oh, you are *kidding*."

The Gates foundation offices, in Seattle, are aggressively nondescript. There is no name on any building or door, and no architectural grandeur. The foundation receives thousands of grant proposals every year. (Program officers appraise them first, and then rely on outside committees of experts for guidance before deciding whom to fund and how much to award.) The criteria are straightforward. "We look at three things," Richard Klausner told me one day in his office. "The burden, the inequity of that burden, and the inequity of attention." Diabetes, for example, is a big problem in the developing world, but it gets a lot of attention and also affects the rich part of the world, so neither pharmaceutical companies nor Western scientists need Gates money.

Gates sends a constant stream of e-mail to Stonesifer, Klausner, and the other top scientists at the foundation. Although he remains the chairman of Microsoft and seems no less consumed by its affairs, he still finds time to pore over every major grant that the foundation makes, and he asks dozens of highly technical questions about each of them. "Bill is a guy who enjoys spending his free time reading and rereading immunology textbooks and learning a bit more about molecular biology," Klausner said. Bob Dylan's "Chronicles: Volume 1" sat prominently on Klausner's desk, next to a fat book filled with N.I.H. budget projections. "Guess which one I would rather read?" he said. "Well, Bill would choose the other." Once, when I asked Gates if he watched television, he said, "Not really." Then he conceded that he liked to watch while he was on his treadmill, particularly the show "24." "Although a little less after

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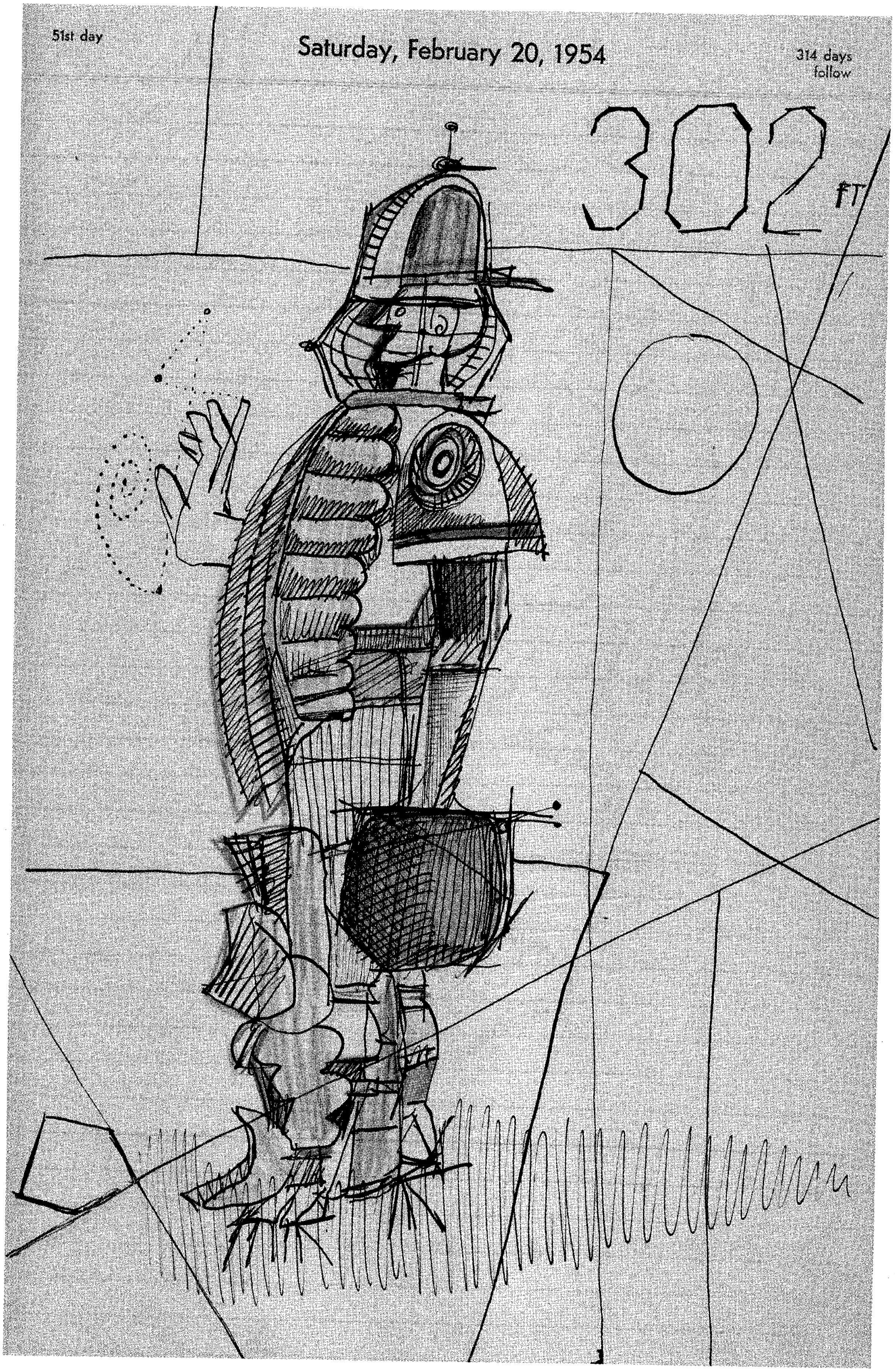
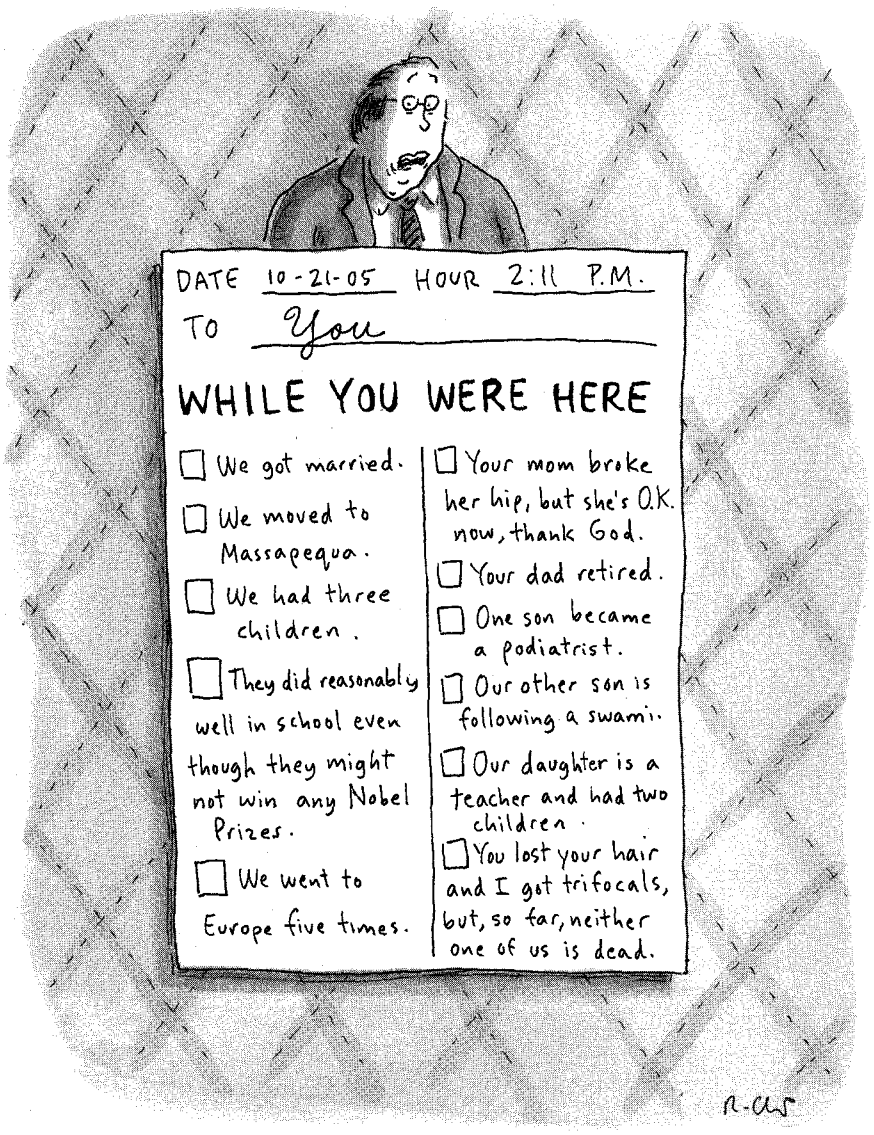
SKETCHBOOK BY SAUL STEINBERG



51st day
Saturday, February 20, 1954
314 days follow
302 FT

Kim left," he said, referring to the role played by the actress Elisha Cuthbert. When I started to mention something about a recent episode, Gates jumped in before I could finish the first sentence. "No!" he shouted. "Don't say one word until December the sixth. That's when the last season comes out on DVD. I'll be able to discuss it the next day—well, it might take me two days."

Nothing animates Gates more than the attempt to find vaccines for AIDS and malaria. He has been the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative's most prominent and consistent supporter. He told me that he hoped to live to see vaccines for both diseases used widely. When he is criticized in the public-health world, it is usually because he has focussed so prominently on cutting-edge, next-generation vaccine research, rather than on the use of more conventional technology that could have immediate effects. "Genomic data, of course, is the future," he told me. "We are really down to a rational-design approach to drugs. We can even sort immune cells and see what proteins come out where." Gates is right: at some point in the next generation, our understanding of genetics will undoubtedly help produce fundamental advances in medicine. For now, though, many wonder if an emphasis on simpler solutions would save more lives. "The Gates approach is highly scientific," Allan Schapira, of Roll Back Malaria, told me when I was in Geneva. Schapira spends most of his time figuring out how to best deploy bed nets and to stave off drug resistance in Africa. "I don't want to say it's wrong," he said of Gates's approach. "There can be valuable questions." But he personally found it hard to concentrate on the future when so many people are dying now. Even Klausner, on more than one occasion, has discussed with me the pitfalls in counting on high-tech solutions when other answers already exist.


DATE 10-21-05 HOUR 2:11 P.M.
TO You
WHILE YOU WERE HERE
☐ We got married.
☐ We moved to Massapequa.
☐ We had three children.
☐ They did reasonably well in school even though they might not win any Nobel Prizes.
☐ We went to Europe five times.
☐ Your mom broke her hip, but she's O.K. now, thank God.
☐ Your dad retired.
☐ One son became a podiatrist.
☐ Our other son is following a swami.
☐ Our daughter is a teacher and had two children.
☐ You lost your hair and I got trifocals, but, so far, neither one of us is dead.
R. Ch

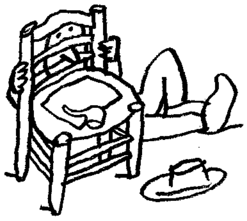
Appeals for low-tech solutions by public-health leaders and by African scientists like Stephen Magesa were traditionally ignored, because they cost too much. In places where the government spends less than ten dollars a year on each citizen's health, bed nets, drugs, and the use of various pesticides (which has kept the United States malaria-free) are out of the question. In Zambia, malaria kills one child out of five. This May, the Gates foundation decided to award thirty-five million dollars to MACEPA, the Malaria Control and Evaluation Partnership in Africa, to help Zambia. The program will be administered by Kent Campbell, who spent many years at the C.D.C. The immediate target is to cut deaths by seventy-five per cent within three years. But the greater goal is to create a model of what is possible in a poor African nation. The government of Zambia will purchase hundreds of thousands of insecticide-treated mosquito nets, thousands of doses of artemisinin combination therapy, and enough insecticide to spray every house in the country. "We need to prove that children don't have to die," Brian Chituwo, the Zambian health minister, told me. "And with this money I think we can."

There is almost universal acknowledgment that the research pipeline for new malaria drugs has never seemed better. There are also techniques that lessen the likelihood that the parasite will become resistant. One of the most promising of these techniques is the use of intermittent preventive treatment for infants. In recent studies, scientists gave babies three doses of medicine during the first year of their lives, whether or not they had malaria, when they received routine immunizations to other diseases. Such preventive therapy has already been shown to help protect pregnant women; and in early studies the children's risk of contracting malaria was cut by more than half. So was the incidence of severe anemia. Still, drugs require money (lots of it), vigilance, and a functioning health-care system, and the emergence of resistant strains will always pose a threat.

A malaria vaccine, on the other hand, would save many more lives, and at a far lower cost. "There is a huge distinction you have to make between a chronic treatment and something you take once in your life," Gates said. "Mumps is complicated. Rubella is complicated. So is polio. But a onetime treatment and boom"—he clapped his hands together. "There you go."

Nobody has ever made a vaccine that works against a parasite, but scientists have spent decades trying. The organism itself is stupefyingly complex; but the relationship of a mosquito, the falciparum parasite, and a human is far more so. Anopheles mosquitoes require a meal of blood in order to lay their eggs—and they almost always feed at night. Malaria begins when a female mosquito bites somebody who has already been infected. The mosquito becomes infected, too, then passes that infection to its next victim in a form of the parasite called sporozoite. Once sporozoites enter the body, they glide into the bloodstream and travel to the liver, where they divide repeatedly. Two days later, about the time that the parasites leave the liver, ten original sporozoites have created millions of progeny. They then invade red blood cells and begin to feed on them, and within two weeks they will number more than thirty billion.

Last year, for the first time, a vaccine offered partial protection against infection. In a study on more than two thousand children in Mozambique, the risk of developing severe malaria was reduced by fifty-eight per cent. The vaccine attempts to stimulate immunity by using one of the proteins on the surface of the malaria parasite when it invades the liver. It was produced by GlaxoSmithKline and, along with more than a dozen other experimental vaccines, was supported by the Malaria Vaccine Initiative. Most of the funding came from the Gates foundation. Although this vaccine is not a miracle cure, even partial protection against a disease that kills millions would help. Nonetheless, the foundation is intent on finding a vaccine that works better. Regina Rabinovitch said, "We would like to take a vaccine and have it be ninety-nine per cent effective—a mosquito bites you, it takes a blood meal, shoots some parasites into you, and within five minutes those parasites are dead." The problem is that such a response would require a high level of the right kind of antibodies. It would have to work early, in the blood or just as the sporozoites enter the liver—before they destroy billions of red blood cells. "That is the holy grail for you and me and the United States military," Rabinovitch said. Malaria has always had a profound effect on the military. During the war in Vietnam, for example, there were places in which the number of malaria cases reported by G.I.s each year equalled—and even exceeded—the number of U.S. troops.



"But this is where it gets a bit messy," Rabinovitch continued. "Let's say we got that immunity and it waned after five years. You would then be immunologically naïve." For an American soldier, she said, it wouldn't matter, because "you're only there for two years or less." But, she went on, "if you are a child who is living in Africa, who is dying at the highest rates, what would happen if that immunity wore off? All of a sudden, you would be like an infant again—the people who are at greatest risk. So if we had a vaccine and its effects didn't last, children would be at risk once again beginning when they are about five years old. So we really want something that provides protection from severe disease, and death, so that if you still get infected you will generate an immune response, and the likelihood that you will die or become severely sick is lower.

"The goal is to turn a six-month-old into a ten-year-old, so that he has protective immunity. This is called the 'leaky-bed-net model.' We know that it doesn't decrease all exposure. It acts as a baited trap with a human inside and the mosquito touches the net and neurologically becomes a little nutso and dies."

The parasite's greatest weapon is its ability to avoid the immune system by continually changing both its surface proteins and its location: every time it moves from a mosquito's gut to its salivary gland and from there to our liver and red blood cells, it changes form. The tools of molecular genetics are finally letting scientists attack each different stage of the infection—and there are now many vaccines in development. Some work at the blood stage and some at the liver stage. I asked Rabinovitch how she chooses which to fund. She smiled. "We are supporting all of them," she said. "This foundation is agnostic when it comes to malaria religion. We just want something that works."

The Seattle Biomedical Research Institute is more than twenty-five years old, and the scientists there work solely on eliminating infectious disease. Last year, the institute moved into a new building a couple of miles from the Gates foundation, with laboratories equipped with gene-sequencing machines, microchip arrays, and powerful new computers. It's a Bill Gates kind of place. Institute scientists are working on several malaria vaccines. One of them is based on research by Michal Fried and Patrick Duffy, who is on loan from the Army. Their discovery of a distinct form of falciparum which adheres only to the placenta suggests that they might be able to create a vaccine for pregnant women. Their goal is to prevent sickness, not necessarily to prevent infection.

Stefan Kappe, a young German parasitologist at the institute, takes an entirely different approach. He has been studying the mosquito itself. Since the parasite moves from a human into a mosquito, as well as in the other direction, Kappe is trying to find a way to prevent infection by disabling falciparum before it can make it to the liver. Exposure to radiation weakens the sporozoites that mosquitoes carry in their salivary glands. When those sporozoites are injected into a person, they stimulate immune activity and protect him from malaria. That is how most basic vaccines work. A measles vaccine, for example, is a live strain of the virus that has been weakened to the point where it can do no harm; yet it tricks the immune system into creating antibodies to defend itself against genuine measles viruses.

Until sequencing technology made it possible to manipulate genes in the parasite, this approach never seemed worth pursuing. The parasite has to be alive to spark the immune system, and it would have been unethical to inoculate people with live parasites—even weak ones. Nor would it ever be possible to X-ray enough mosquitoes to protect the world from them. So Kappe is using genomics to destroy only those genes which are essential for the parasite to grow in the liver. He, too, is supported by a grant from the Gates foundation. "I would never have received funding for this particular project—any classical review mechanism at N.I.H. would have come back and said no, too far-out," he said. "The Gates people know it's far-out. But sometimes far-out works."

Kappe wondered what would happen if he could weaken the falciparum parasite enough to stimulate the human immune system without endangering it. It's a tricky prospect, because the parasite needs to do at least part of its job. Weaken the parasite too much and it would not be capable of inducing a useful immune response; but, if it isn't weakened enough, the inoculation would simply give people malaria. Relying on the full spectrum of modern genetic tools (as well as on educated guesses), Kappe was able to identify several genes that help falciparum to grow and to survive. He then started deleting individual genes, to see what effect that caused. "We were lucky to find two genes that when we delete them the parasite really gets stuck in its development," Kappe told me. "What matters the most here is that these deletions don't affect other parts of the life cycle." Without these genes, the falciparum parasite cannot cause infections in red blood cells, because it never makes it out of the liver.

GAUGUIN, REVIENS!

The only place you can keep enough mosquitoes to do this kind of research is an insectary—which is a cross between a zoo for insects and a laboratory. There are just a few in the world; they require constant oversight, lots of space, and a perfect climate. The insectary at the institute is a very humid room, and, as we entered, several of Kappe's colleagues, working with dissecting microscopes, were removing parasites from the glands of mosquitoes. Behind the researchers lay long pans with hundreds of tiny eggs about to hatch. A female anopheles will lay a raft of about a hundred eggs at a time. The males live for sex, last about a week, and then die. Kappe's vaccine has worked in mice, stranding the parasite in the liver and preventing further infection. But he has a long way to go before he can test it on humans. "This association between the parasite and the mosquito is millions of years old," he said. "It's absolutely a brilliant example of evolution. But if we want to succeed we will have to reproduce this intricate relationship exactly. We have to create that environment and then manipulate it. I come from genetics and from the world of parasite biology. I believe that with modern technology we can make live vaccines that are protective. I don't think that is in the future. I think it's now."

David Schellenberg, a clinical epidemiologist from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, has spent much of the past decade in Africa, and he sees the struggle in a less exalted way. On the day of my visit, he was standing in the middle of his office at the Ifakara Health Research and Development Centre, on the northern edge of Dar es Salaam, along with a young Tanzanian man who works for him. Schellenberg was excited. A rough wooden box sat on a table in front of them. Jumper cables snaked out of one end of the box, and a car's cigarette lighter was at the other end. Schellenberg thanked the man profusely. "This could be as important and valuable as anything we have ever done for malaria," he told me as I entered the room. He was not entirely joking. Schellenberg is running some of the most important malaria drug trials in Africa—testing whether a few doses of preventive medicine will help protect infants from the disease. The contraption on the table had been rigged to charge the batteries of computers in the many study villages where electricity is often absent. "We need computers to work out there if we are to collect data and store them properly. But, with the electricity so bad, the computers are completely unreliable." Schellenberg is a soft-spoken, studious-looking man with close-cropped hair, blue eyes, and gold wire-rimmed glasses. Like any doctor who has worked both in the lab and in the village, he is well aware of the difference between efficacy and effectiveness. When researchers announce that they know how to do something because they have the scientific data to back it up, those data are based on efficacy—not effectiveness. "The difference between what you see in the clinical world and what you find in the real world can be enormous," Schellenberg said. "And in the real world sometimes you don't feel you can afford the fine print." Some of the earliest trials involving preventive treatment of pregnant women and of children were conducted at Ifakara. "Often a clinical trial proves something can work—the use of bed nets, for example, or a new regimen of drugs," Schellenberg said. "But does that mean that everyone in every village or city in Africa will accept the results?"

Schellenberg and his wife, Joanna, who is also a malaria researcher, have two sons, eleven and seven. They moved back to Africa from England last year. Their first posting lasted six years, but their older son contracted drug-resistant malaria and almost died. "He was airlifted to Nairobi, and he had chest surgery," Schellenberg told me. "Then he had pneumonia and that led to abscesses. We very nearly lost him. He is fine now, but it was scary. You can imagine after that there was a lot of soul-searching about whether or not to return. But we are here because this is where we really belong." He said this with no remorse. "Look, we are lucky. We were able to call a plane and get him out of there. So he lived. That is not the way it is for the other children who get this disease. There are no planes. No drugs. No doctors. And no real hope of surviving. So when we asked ourselves, 'What are

A MIRROR FOR A QUESTION

I asked, and they said: the branch
swathed in flame is a sparrow.
They said: my face
was the waves, the world's face a pile of mirrors,
a lighthouse, and the sailor's sorrow.

I arrived and the world in my way
was ink, each gesture a phrase.
I did not know that between it and me
there was a bridge named Brotherhood
made of steps, prophecy, and fire.

I did not know that my face
was a ship that sails inside a spark.

—*Adonis*

(*Translated, from the Arabic, by Khaled Mattawa.*)

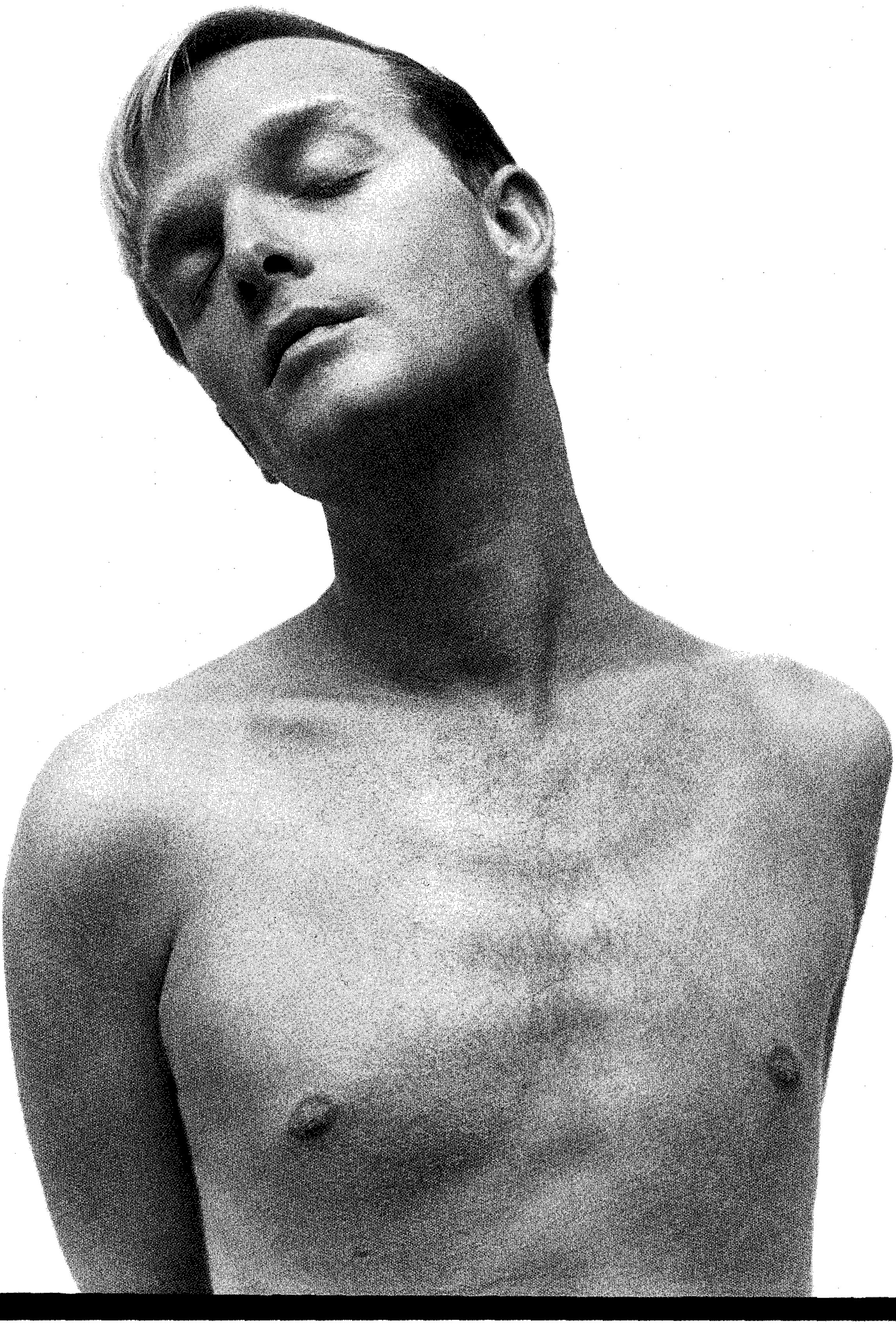
we doing by coming back,' we had to think about that."

The Gates foundation supports much of Schellenberg's work—and other studies of intermittent therapy as well. He is grateful. But Schellenberg, like many of his colleagues, is concerned about what he sees as a growing preoccupation with futuristic technology. "Ten years ago, we were saying that a vaccine would not be available for at least ten years. Now we seem to be saying the same thing. I think we need not put our hopes in magic bullets when we have the arsenal to make such an impact now. What we need are magic guns, not magic bullets," he said. "We need to be able to deliver what we already have." Schellenberg admits that while he is attracted to the "shiny, scientifically exciting stuff, a lot of what we are doing in southern Tanzania now is not scientifically challenging. It's like that wooden box with the cigarette lighter. We are making simple things. And the questions we are asking are not very exciting in scientific ways. But they are urgent. This is what we need to do now. We need to make things work. Not just work under ideal conditions."

Bill Gates approaches life as if it were a problem that needed to be solved. At times, he appears as if he had stepped out of a Henry James novel: a confounding mixture of innocence, arrogance, and belief in what is right—the American Man. Gates's eager, energetic view of the world is stamped on everything he does: from his house, where guests can program their rooms to reflect their taste, to the software company he founded. Microsoft, whatever else it is or has become, began as a collection of smart people who realized that technology, when driven by the right kind of intelligence, rules the world. Gates feels the same way about improving public health. His faith in progress is absolute. "The complexity of biology and how it works is so interesting," he told me one day. "And, in terms of human welfare, the idea of getting rid of these diseases—which could be in our lifetime—is just very exciting." That final sentiment makes many public-health officials nervous. "The eradication of disease and the alleviation of suffering depends more on developing the skills of talented people than on technology," a generally favorable editorial about the foundation recently declared in the British scientific journal *The Lancet*. Gates has put aside more than a billion dollars to help disadvantaged American students earn college degrees. The *Lancet* editorial suggests that a similar educational investment in developing countries might do more good than many programs that emphasize science alone. Both historical and contemporary studies have shown that the public health of a nation only improves through a combination of social and political measures. Medicine matters, of course, but it is far from the only thing that does. (The United States is the richest country in the world and the most technologically advanced, yet it ranks twenty-ninth among world nations in life expectancy and thirty-eighth in infant mortality.) "In calling on the world's researchers to develop innovative solutions targeted to 'the most critical scientific challenges in global health,' the Gates Foundation has turned to a narrowly conceived understanding of health as a product of technical interventions divorced from economic, social, and political contexts," the Canadian health economist Anne-Emanuelle Birn wrote recently.

Gates has heard these criticisms, and the foundations's recent commitment to a full-scale attack on malaria in Zambia illustrates that. It is impossible to doubt the sincerity of Bill or Melinda Gates, or to question the impact they have had, and will have, on the world. Yet it would be hard to expect the iconic American technologist, a man who has made one of the world's great fortunes by harnessing the flow of information, to abdicate the future. "I do believe in progress," he told me in Seattle. "Capitalism is an unusual system, in that somebody can have so much wealth. But then again it's an unusual system because money can actually flow from the luckiest to the unluckiest and hopefully in clever ways so that it's not just writing checks.

"We do not measure ourselves at all by the amount given," he continued. "We have taken on the top twenty killers, and for everything we do we look at the cost per life saved and real outcomes in terms of how things get improved. It's fun, and it is also an enormous responsibility. But having my job at Microsoft is also fun and a huge responsibility. That is true for being a parent. Many of the most important things in life are like that. Why else would you want to get up in the morning?" ♦



FICTION

SUMMER CROSSING

BY TRUMAN CAPOTE

Broadway is a street; it is also a neighborhood, an atmosphere. From the time she was thirteen, and during all those winters at Miss Risdale's classes, Grady had made, even if it meant skipping school, as it often did, secret and weekly expeditions into this atmosphere, the attraction at first being band shows at the Paramount, the Strand, curious movies that never played the theatres east of Fifth or in Stamford and Greenwich. Since she had turned seventeen, however, she had liked only to walk around or stand on street corners with crowds moving about her. She would stay all afternoon and sometimes until it was dark. But it was never dark there: the lights that had been running all day grew yellow at dusk, white at night, and the faces, those dream-trapped faces, revealed the most to her then. Anonymity was part of the pleasure, but while she was no longer Grady McNeil, she did not know who it was that replaced her, and the tallest fires of her excitement burned with a fuel she could not name. She never mentioned it to anyone, those pearl-eyed perfumed Negroes, those men, silk- or sailor-shirted, toughs or pale-toothed and lavender-suited, those men who watched, smiled, followed: *Which way are you going*? Some faces, like the lady who changed money at Nick's Amusements, were faces that belonged nowhere, were green shadows under green eyeshades, evening effigies embalmed and floating in the caramel-sweet air. *Hurry.* Doorway megaphones, frenziedly hurling into the glare sad roars of rhythm, accelerated the senses to collapse: run—out of the white into the real, the sexless, the jazzless, the joyful dark. These infatuating terrors she had told to no one.

On a side street off Broadway and not far from the Roxy Theatre there was an open-air parking lot. A lonesome, wasted-looking area, it lay there, the only substantial sight on a block of popcorn emporiums and turtle shops. There was a sign at the entrance which said "NEMO PARKING." It was expensive, and altogether inconvenient, but earlier in the year, after the McNeils had closed their Fifth Avenue apartment and opened the house in Connecticut, Grady had started leaving her car there whenever she drove into town.

Sometime in April, a young man had come to work at the parking lot. His name was Clyde Manzer.

After seeing her parents off at the pier, Grady headed for the parking lot on foot. Before she reached it she was already looking for him: on dull mornings he occasionally wandered around in the neighborhood or sat in a local Automat drinking coffee. But he was nowhere to be seen; nor did she find him when she reached the lot itself. It was noon, and a hot smell of gasoline came off the gravel. Though obviously he was not there, she crossed the lot calling his name impatiently; the relief of her parents' sailing to Europe for the summer, the year or hour she had waited to see him, all the things that had buoyed her through the morning seemed at once to have fallen out from under her. She finally gave up and stood quietly despondent in the throbbing glare. Then she remembered that sometimes he took naps in one of the cars.

Her own car, a blue Buick convertible with her initials on the Connecticut license plate, was the last in line, and while she was still searching several cars away she realized she was going to find him there. He was asleep in the back seat. Although the top was lowered, she had not seen him before because he was scrunched down out of view. The radio hummed faintly with news of the day, and there was a detective story open on his lap. Of many magics, one is watching a beloved sleep: free of eyes and awareness, you for a sweet moment hold the heart of him; helpless, he is then all, however irrationally, you have trusted him to be, man-pure, child-tender. Grady leaned, looking over him, her hair falling a little in her eyes. The young man she looked at—he was somebody of about twenty-three—was neither handsome nor homely; indeed, it would have been difficult to walk in New York and not see reminders of him every few steps, although, being out in the open all day, he was very much more weathered than most. But there was an air of well-built suppleness about him, and his hair, black with small curls, fit him like a neat cap of Persian lamb. His nose was slightly broken, and this gave his face, which, with its rustic flush, was not without a certain quick-witted force, an exaggerated virility. His eyelids trembled, and Grady, feeling the heart of him slip through her fingers, tensed for their opening. "Clyde," she whispered.

He was not the first love she had known. Two years before, when she was sixteen and had first got the car, she had driven around in Connecticut a reserved young couple from New York who were looking for a house. By the time they found the house, a small nice one on the grounds of a country club and side by side with a little lake, this couple, the Boltons, were devoted to her, and Grady, for her part, seemed obsessed: she supervised the moving, she made their rock garden, she found them a servant, and on Saturdays she played golf with Steve or helped him mow the

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

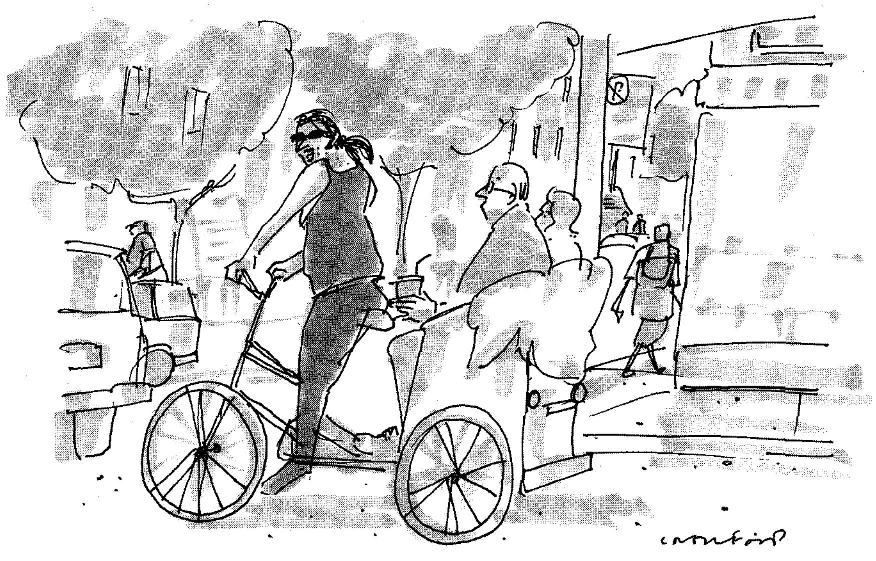
Truman Capote at thirty-one, in 1955, twelve years after writing his newly discovered first novel, "Summer Crossing."

lawn. Janet Bolton, a reserved harmless pretty girl directly out of Bryn Mawr, was five months pregnant and so disinclined toward the strenuous. Steve was a lawyer, and, as he was with a firm that did business with Grady's father, the Boltons were often asked to Old Tree, the name with which the McNeils had dignified their acreage: Steve used the pool there, and the tennis courts, and there was a home that had belonged to Grady's sister Apple that Mr. McNeil gave him more or less on his own. Grady's best friend, Peter Bell, was rather nonplussed, and so were her few other friends, for she saw only the Boltons, or, to her way of thinking, she saw only Steve; and, as though all the time they spent together were not sufficient, she took now and then to riding his commuter train with him into the city. Waiting to take the train home with him in the evening, she wandered from one Broadway movie to another. But there was no peace for her; she could not understand why that first joy she had felt should have turned to pain and now to misery. He knew. She was certain that he knew; his eyes, watching her as she crossed a room, as she swam toward him in the pool, those eyes knew and were not displeased: so, along with her love, she learned something of hate, for Steve Bolton knew, and would do nothing to help her. It was then that every day was contrary, a treading down of ants, a pinching of firefly wings, rages, so it seemed, against all that was as helpless as her helpless and despised self. And she took to wearing the thinnest dresses she could buy, dresses so thin that every leaf shadow or wind ripple was a coolness that stroked her; she would not eat, she liked only to drink Coca-Cola and smoke cigarettes and drive her car, and she became so flat and skinny that the thin dresses blew all around her.

Steve Bolton was in the habit of taking a swim before breakfast in the little lake beside his house, and Grady, who had discovered this, could not get it out of her head: she awoke mornings imagining him at the edge of the lake standing among the water reeds like a strange dawn gold bird. One morning she went there. A small pine grove grew near the lake and it was here that she hid herself, lying flat on the dew-damp needles. A gloom of autumn mist drifted on the lake: of course he was not coming, she had waited too long, summer had gone without her even noticing. Then she saw him on the path: casual, whistling, a cigarette in one hand, a towel in the other. He was wearing only a dressing gown, which, when he reached the lake, he pulled off and threw on a rock. It was as though at last her star had fallen, one that, striking earth, turned not black but burned more bluely still. Half kneeling now, her arms lifted outward, as if to touch, to salute him while he waded there growing fairy-tale tall, it seemed, and lengthening toward her until, with the barest warning, he sank into the deep below the reeds: Grady, a cry escaping despite everything, slipped back against a tree, embracing it as though it were some portion of his love, some part of his splendor.

Janet Bolton's baby was born at the end of the season: the autumn, pheasant-speckled week before the McNeils closed Old Tree and moved back to their winter quarters in town. Janet Bolton was pretty desperate. She had almost lost the baby twice, and her nurse, after winning some sort of dance contest, had become increasingly irreverent: most of the time she didn't bother appearing, so, if it had not been for Grady, Janet would not have known what to do. Grady would come over and make a little lunch and give the house a quick dust. There was one duty she approached always with elation: she liked to collect Steve's laundry and hang up his clothes. The day the baby was born, Grady found Janet doubled up and screaming. Whenever she had reason to be, Grady was always surprised at how fondly concerned her feelings for Janet actually were. She was a trifle of a person, like a seashell that might be picked up and, because of its pink frilled perfection, kept to admire but never put among a collector's serious treasures; unimportance was both her charm and her protection, for it was impossible to feel, as Grady certainly didn't, threatened by or jealous of her. But on the morning that Grady walked in and heard her screaming she felt a satisfaction which, while not meant to be cruel, at least prevented her from going at once to give aid, for it was as if all the torments she herself knew had been triumphantly transposed into expression by these moments of Janet Bolton's agony. When at length she brought herself to do the necessary things, she did them very well. She called the doctor, took Janet to the hospital, then rang up Steve in New York.

He came out on the next train. It was an uneasy afternoon they spent together at the hospital; night came, and still no word, and Steve, who had managed with Grady a few jokes, a game of hearts, withdrew to a corner and let silence settle between them. The stale despair of train schedules and business and bills to be paid seemed to rise off him like tired dust, and he sat there blowing smoke rings, zeros as hollow as Grady had begun to feel. . . . It was as if she curved away from



"Don't argue with me. The F.D.R. will be faster!"

him into space, as if the lake image of him receded before her until now she could see him actually, a view that struck her as the most moving of any, for, with the exhausted droop of his shoulders and the tear at the corner of his eye, he belonged to Janet and to her child. Wanting to show her love for him, not as a lover but as a man slumped with love and birth, she moved toward him. A nurse had come to the doorway, and Steve Bolton heard of his son without any change of expression. Slowly he climbed to his feet, his eyes blind-pale, and with a sigh that swayed the room his head fell forward on Grady's shoulder: "I'm a very happy man," he said. It was done then, there was nothing more she wanted of him, summer's desires had fallen to winter seed: winds blew them far before another April broke their flower.

"Come on, light me a cigarette." Clyde Manzer's voice, grouchy with sleep but always fairly hoarse and furry, had some singular quality: it was easy to get an impression of whatever he said, for there was a mumbling power, subdued as a throttle left running, that dragged the slow fuse of maleness through every syllable; nevertheless, he stumbled over words, his pauses occasionally separating sentences so much that all sense evaporated. "Don't nigger-lip it, kid. You always nigger-lip." The voice, though attractive in its way, could be misleading; because of it, some people thought him stupid. This proved them simply unobservant: Clyde Manzer was not in the least stupid. His particular smartness was, in fact, the plainly obvious. The four-lettered scholarship that carries a diploma in know-how—how to run, where to hide, how to ride the subway and see a movie and use a pay phone, all without paying, the knowledge that comes with a city childhood of block warfare and desperate afternoons when only the cruel and the clever, the swift, the brave survive—was the training that gave his eyes their agile intensity. "Aw, you nigger-lipped it. Christ, I knew you would."

"I'll smoke it," Grady said, and, using a mirrored lighter with her initial in sequins, she lit him another. One Monday, which was Clyde's day off, they had gone to a shooting gallery and he had won the lighter there and given it to her. Since then she liked lighting everybody's cigarettes: there was an excitement in seeing her secret, disguised as thin fire, leap naked between herself, who knew, and someone else, who might discover.

"Thanks, kid," he said, accepting the new cigarette. "You're a good kid. You didn't nigger-lip it. I'm just in a lousy mood, that's all. I shouldn't ought to sleep like that. I was having dreams."

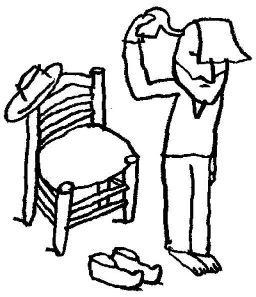
"I hope I was in them."

"I don't remember nothing I dream," he said, rubbing his chin as though he needed a shave. "So tell me, did you get them off, your folks?"

"Just now—an old friend showed up. It was very confused. I came straight from the pier."

"There's an old friend of mine I'd like to show up," he said, and spit on the ground. "Mink. You know Mink? I told you, the guy I was in the Army with. On account of what you said, I said for him to come around and take over this afternoon. The bastard owes me two bucks. I told him if he'd come around I'd forget it. So, baby," his reaching hand touched the cool silk of her blouse, "unless the guy shows up," and then, with a gentle pressure, slipped to her breast, "I guess I'm stuck here." They regarded each other silently for as long as it took a tear of sweat to slide from the top of his forehead down the length of his cheek. "I missed you," he said. And he would have said something more if a customer had not come rolling into the lot.

Three ladies from Westchester, in for lunch and a matinée; Grady sat in the car and waited while Clyde went to attend them. She liked the way he walked, the way his legs seemed to take their time, each step lazily spaced and oddly loping: it was the walk of a tall man. But Clyde was not much taller than she was. Around the parking lot he always wore a pair of summer khakis and a flannel shirt or an old sweater: it was a kind of dress better looking and far more suitable to him than the suit he was so proud of. He was usually wearing that suit, a double-breasted blue pin-stripe, whenever he appeared in her dreams; she could not imagine why, but, for that matter, her dreams about him were unreasonable anyway. In them she was perpetually the spectator and he was with someone else, some other girl, and they would walk past, smirking disdainfully or dismissing her by looking the other way: the humiliation was great, her jealousy greater, it was unreasonable. Still, her anxiety had some basis: two or three times she was sure he had taken her car out driving, and once, after she had left the car there overnight, she had found lodged between the cushions a garish little compact, decidedly not her own. But she did not mention these things to Clyde; she kept the compact and never spoke of it.



"Ain't you Manzer's girl?" She had been dialling for music on the radio; she had not heard anyone approach, and so it was startling when she looked up and found a man leaning against the car, his eyes screwed on her and half his mouth crooked in a smile that showed a gold tooth and a silver one. "I said, you're Manzer's girl, huh? We saw the picture of you in the magazine. That was a good picture. My girl Winifred—Manzer tell you about Winifred?—she liked that picture a lot. You think the guy that took it would take one of her? It'd give her a big kick." Grady could only look at him, and that hardly, for he was like a fat quivering baby grown with freakish suddenness to the size of an ox; his eyes popped and his lips sagged. "I'm Mink," he said, and pulled out a cigarette, which Grady allowed him to light. She began blowing the car horn as loud as she could.

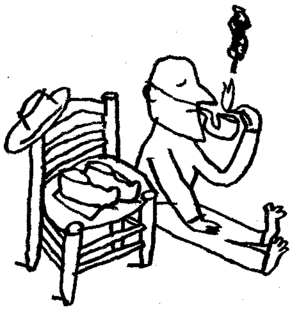
Clyde could never be hurried; after parking the Westchester car he ambled over at his own convenience. "What the hell's the racket?" he said.

"This man, well, he's here."

"So, you think I can't see that? Hiya, Mink." Turning away from her, he brought his attention to the floury smiling face of Mink, and Grady resumed her efforts with the radio. She was seldom quick to resent anything Clyde said: his tempers affected her only in as much as they made her feel closer to him, for that he released them against her so freely reflected the degree of their intimacy. She would have preferred, however, that nothing had been reflected in front of this ox-child: *Ain't you Manzer's girl*? She had imagined Clyde talking of her to his friends, even showing them her picture in a magazine: that was all right, why not? On the other hand, her imaginings had not gone so far as to consider what sort of friends they might be. But it was pretty late in the day for climbing a high horse; so, smiling, she tried to accept Mink, and said, "Clyde was afraid you might not be able to come. You're awfully nice to do this for us."

Mink beamed as if she had pressed a light switch inside him; it was painful, because she could see, by the new life in his face, that he knew she had not liked him and that it had mattered. "Oh yeah, yeah, I wouldn't let Manzer down. I'd have been here sooner, only Winifred, you know Winifred, she's on a strike from her job and she had me down there to tell off some big—pardon." Grady's eyes fidgeted in the direction of the Nemo's little office-shack: Clyde had gone there to change his clothes, and she was anxious for him to come back, not only because being alone with Mink was nerve-racking but because, and it was as true when he'd been gone a minute as a week, she missed him. "That's a great car you got, sure is. Winifred's uncle, he's the one in Brooklyn, he buys used cars—bet he'd give you a load for that. Say, we all of us ought to double-date one night, drive out dancing, know what I mean?"

Clyde's reappearance relieved her of answering. Under a leather windbreaker he'd put on a clean white shirt and a tie; there was an attempt at a part in his hair and his shoes were shined. He planted himself before her, his eyes set apart and his hands cocked on his hips: the glare of the sun made him scowl, but his whole attitude seemed to say, How do I look? And Grady said, "Darling, you look just wonderful!"



It had been her idea for them to lunch in Central Park at the cafeteria which adjoins the zoo. Because the McNeils' apartment was on Fifth Avenue and almost opposite the zoo, she had long since wearied of it, but today, goaded on by the novelty of eating out of doors, it seemed a gala notion; and, furthermore, it would all be new to Clyde, for he drew a blank concerning certain sections of the city: the entire territory, for instance, that, beginning around the Plaza, stretches and widens up and eastward. This Park East world was naturally the New York Grady knew best: except for Broadway, she'd not often ventured out of it. And so she'd thought it was a joke when Clyde said he hadn't even known there was a zoo in Central Park; at least, that is, he had no memory of one. These ignorances intensified the over-all riddle of his background. She knew the number and the names of his family: there was a mother, two sisters who worked, a younger brother; the father, who had been a police sergeant, was dead. And she knew generally where they lived: it was somewhere in Brooklyn, a house near the ocean that required over an hour by subway to reach. Then there were several friends whose names she'd heard often enough to remember: Mink, whom she'd just seen, another called Bubble, and a third named Gump; once, she'd asked if these were real names, and Clyde had said, "Sure."

But the picture she had devised from these oddments was too amateurish to deserve even the most modest frame: it lacked perspective and showed little talent for detail. The blame, of course, belonged to Clyde, who just was not much given to talk. Also, he seemed very little curious himself: Grady, alarmed sometimes by the meagreness of his inquiries and the indifference this might suggest, supplied him liberally with personal information, which isn't to say she always told the truth—how many people in love do? or can?—but at least she permitted him enough truth to account more or less accurately for all the life she had lived away from him. It was her feeling, however, that he would as soon not hear her confessions; he seemed to want her to be as elusive, as secretive as he was himself. And yet she could not quite properly accuse him of secretiveness: whatever she asked, he answered. Still, it was like trying to peer through a Venetian blind. (It was as if the world where they joined were a ship, one becalmed between the two islands that were themselves: with any effort he could see the shore of hers, but his was lost in the unlifting mist.) Once, armed with a far-fetched idea, she had taken the subway to Brooklyn, thinking that if only she could see the house where he lived and walk the streets that he walked, then she would understand and know him as she wanted to; but she had never been to Brooklyn before, and the ghostly lonesome streets, the lowness of the land stretching in a confusion of look-alike bungalows, of empty lots and silent vacancy, was so terrifying that after twenty steps she turned and fled back down into the subway. She realized afterward that from the outset she'd known the trip would be a failure. Perhaps Clyde, without conscious insight, had chosen best in bypassing islands and settling for the solitude of a ship, but their voyage seemed to have no port of call of any kind; and, while they were sitting on the terrace of the cafeteria in the shade of an umbrella, Grady had again sudden cause to need the reassurance of land.

She had wanted it to be fun, a celebration in their own honor; and it was: the seals conspired to amuse, the peanuts were hot, the beer cold. But Clyde would not really relax. He was solemn with the duties of an escort on such an excursion: Peter Bell would have bought a balloon for mockery's sake; Clyde presented her with one as part of a tenacious ritual. It was so touching to Grady, and so silly, that for a while she was ashamed to look at him. She held fast to the balloon all through lunch, as if her own happiness bobbed and strained at the string. But it was at the end of lunch that Clyde said, "Look, you know I'd like to stay! Only something came up, and I've got to be home early. It was something I'd forgot about, or I would've told you before."

Grady was casual, but she chewed her lip before replying. "I'm sorry," she said, "that really is too bad." And then, with a temper she could not detour, "Yes, I must say you should've told me before. I wouldn't have bothered to plan anything."

"What kind of things did you have in mind, kid?" Clyde said this with a smile that exposed a slight lewdness. The young man who laughed at seals and bought balloons had reversed his profile, and the new side, which showed a harsher angle, was the one Grady was never able to defend herself against: its brashness so attracted, so crippled her she was left desiring only to appease.

"Never mind that," she said, forcing a lewd note of her own. "There's nobody at the apartment now and I'd thought we'd go there and cook supper." Tower-high

WEST AND EAST

Something stretches in history's tunnel.
Something decorated and mined
carrying its oil-poisoned child
sung to in a poisoned trade.
It was an East like a child asking,
pleading,
and West was his infallible elder.

I switched this map around,
for the world is all burned up:
East and West, a heap
of ash gathered
in the self-same grave.

—*Adonis*

(*Translated, from the Arabic, by Khaled Mattawa.*)

and running halfway across a building, the windows of the apartment, as she had pointed out to him, could be seen from the cafeteria terrace. But any suggestion of visiting there appeared to upset him: he smoothed his hair and twisted tighter the knot of his tie. "When do you have to go home? Not right away?"

He shook his head; then, telling her what she most wanted to know, which was why he had to go at all, he said, "It's my brother. The kid's having his bar mitzvah and it's only right I ought to be there."

"A bar mitzvah? I thought that was something Jewish."

Stillness like a blush came over his face. He did not even look when a brazen pigeon sedately plucked a crumb off the table.

"Well, it *is* something Jewish, isn't it?"

"I'm Jewish. My mother is," he said.

Grady sat silent letting the surprise of his remark wrap around her like a vine; and it was then, while splashes of conversation at nearby tables rolled in waves, that she saw how far they were from any shore. It was unimportant that he was Jewish; this was the sort of thing Apple might have made an issue of, but it would never have occurred to Grady to consider it in any person, not Clyde certainly. Still, the tone in which he'd told her presumed not only that she would but emphasized further how little she knew him: instead of expanding, her picture of him contracted, and she felt she would have to start all over again. "Well," she began slowly. "And am I supposed to care? I really don't, you know."

"What the hell do you mean, *care*? Who the hell do you think you are? Care about yourself. *I'm nothing to you.*"

An antique lady with a Siamese attached to a leash was listening to them rigidly. It was her presence that kept Grady in check. The balloon had wilted somewhat, the swell of it was beginning to pucker; still clutching it, she pushed back the table, hurried down the steps of the terrace and along a path. It was some minutes before Clyde could catch up with her (and by the time he did it was gone, the anger that had provoked her and carried her away). But he held her by each arm, as if he supposed she might try to break loose. Flakes of sunlight falling through a tree lilted about like butterflies; at a bench beyond them a boy sat with a windup Victrola balanced on his lap and from the Victrola the eel-like song of a solo clarinet spiralled in the fluttered air. "You are something to me, Clyde, and more than that. But I can't discover it because we don't seem to be talking about the same things ever." She stopped then; the pressure of his eyes made language fraudulent, and whatever their purpose as lovers might be Clyde alone seemed to understand it.

"Sure, kid," he said, "anything you say."

And he bought her another balloon; the old one had shrivelled like an apple. This new balloon was far fancier; white and molded to the shape of a cat, it was painted with purple eyes and purple whiskers. Grady was delighted. "Let's go show it to the lions!"

The cat house of a zoo has an ornery smell, an air prowled by sleep, mangy with old breath and dead desires. Comedy in a doleful key is the blowsy she-lion reclining in her cell like a movie queen of silent fame; and a hulking ludicrous sight her mate presents winking at the audience as if he could use a pair of bifocals. Somehow the leopard does not suffer, nor the panther: their swagger makes distinct claims upon the pulse, for not even the indignities of confinement can belittle the danger of their Asian eyes, those gold and ginger flowers blooming with a bristling courage in the dusk of captivity. At feeding time a cat house turns into a thunderous jungle, for the attendant, passing with blood-dyed hands among the cages, is sometimes slow, and his wards, jealous of one who has been fed first, scream down the roof, rattle the steel with roars of longing.

A party of children, who had wedged themselves between Clyde and Grady, jogged and shrieked when the tumult began; but gradually, awed by the swelling tide of it, they grew quiet and clustered closer together. Grady tried to push through them; midway she lost her balloon, and a little girl, silent and evil-eyed, snatched it up and whisked herself off. Both robber and robbery escaped almost unnoticed, for Grady, fevered by the lunging loin-deep animal sounds, wanted only to reach Clyde and, as a leaf folds before the wind or a flower bends beneath the leopard's foot, submit herself to the power of him. There was no need to speak: the tremble of her hand told everything, as, in its answering touch, did his.

In the McNeil apartment it was as if a vast snow had fallen, hushing the great formal rooms and shrouding the furniture in frosty drifts: velvet and needlework, the fine patinas and the perishable gilt, all were spook-white in their coverings against the grime of summer. Somewhere far off in this gloom of snow and drawn draperies a telephone was ringing.

Grady heard it as she came in. First,

before answering it, she led Clyde down a hall so sumptuous that if you, at one end, had spoken no one at the other would have heard. The door to her own room was the last in a line of many. It was the *only* room that the housekeeper, in closing the apartment, had left exactly as it was in winter. Originally it had belonged to Apple, but after her marriage Grady had inherited it. Much as she had tried to rid it of Apple's froufrou, a good deal remained: nasty little perfume cabinets, a hassock as big as a bed, a bed as big as a cloud. But she had wanted the room anyway, for it had French doors leading onto a balcony with a view over all the Park.

Clyde lingered by the door; he had not wanted to come, had said he was not dressed right, and now the ringing telephone seemed to agitate further uncertainties. Grady made him sit down on the hassock. In the center of it there was a phonograph and a stack of records. Sometimes when she was alone she liked to sprawl there playing sluggish songs that nicely accompanied all kinds of queer thoughts. "Play the machine," she said, and, asking why in God's name it hadn't stopped, went to answer the phone. It was Peter Bell: Dinner? Of course, but not there, and please, not the Plaza, and no, she didn't want Chinese food; and no, really, she was absolutely alone, what merriment? Oh, the phonograph—uh huh, Billie Holiday. All right, Pomme Soufflé, seven sharp, see you. As Grady put down the receiver she made a wish that Clyde would ask who had called.

It was not to be granted. So, of her own accord, she said, "Isn't that lovely? I won't have to eat alone after all. Peter Bell's going to take me to dinner."

"Hmm." Clyde went on shuffling through the records. "Say, you got 'Red River Valley'?"

"I've never heard of it," she said briskly, and threw open the French doors. He at least could have asked who Peter Bell was. From the balcony she could see steeples and pennants far over the city quivering in a solution of solid afternoon, though even now the sky was growing fragile and soon would crumble into twilight. He might be gone before then, and, thinking so, she turned back into the room, expectant, urgent.

He had moved from the hassock to the bed. Sitting there on the edge of it, and the bed so big all around him, he looked wistfully small, and apprehensive, as though someone might walk in and catch him here where he had no business being. As if taking protection from her, he put his arms around Grady and rolled her down beside him. "We waited a long time for one of these," he said. "It ought to be good in a bed, honey." The bed was covered in blue and the blue spread before her like depthless sky, but it seemed all unfamiliar, a bed she could've sworn she'd never seen: strange lakes of light rippled the silk surface, the bolstered pillows were mountains of unexplored terrain. She'd never been afraid in the car or among the wooded places they'd found across the river and high upon the Palisades, but the bed, with its lakes and skies and mountains, seemed so impressive, so serious, that it frightened her.

"It was better before God took up knitting."

"You cold or something?" he said. She strained against him; she wanted to pass clear through him.

"It's a chill, it's nothing." And then, pushing a little away, "Say you love me."

"I said it."

"No, oh no. You haven't. I was listening. And you never do."

"Well, give me time."

"Please."

He sat up and glanced at a clock across the room. It was after five. Then decisively he pulled off his windbreaker and began to unlace his shoes.

"Aren't you going to, Clyde?"

He grinned back at her. "Yeah, I'm going to."

"I don't mean that, and, what's more, I don't like it—you sound as though you were talking to a whore."

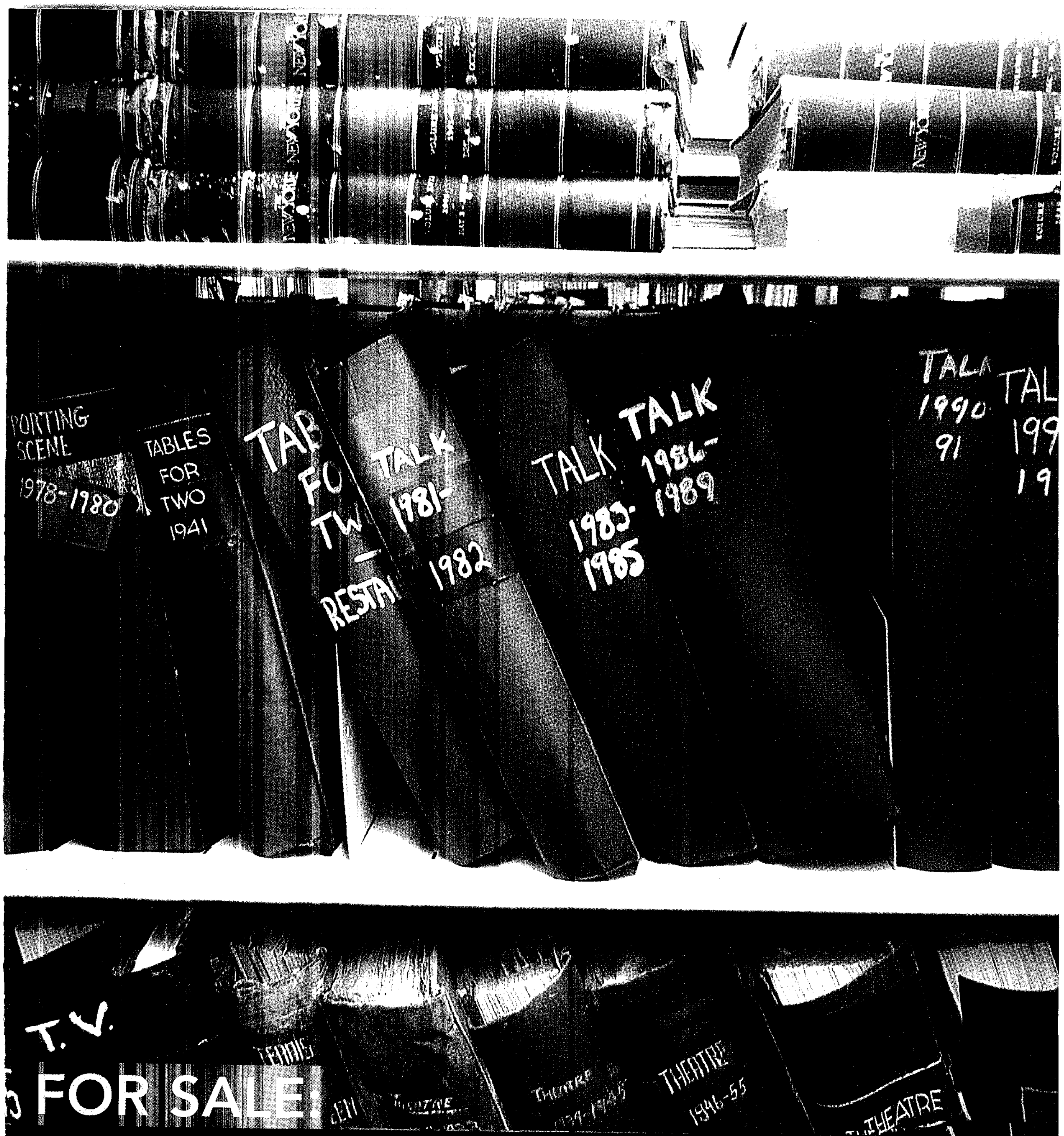
"Come off it, honey. You didn't drag me up here to tell you about love."

"You disgust me," she said.

"Listen to her! She's sore."

A silence followed that circulated like an aggrieved bird. Clyde said, "You want to hit me, huh? I kind of like you when you're sore—that's the kind of girl you are," which made Grady light in his arms when he lifted and kissed her. "You still want me to say it?" Her head slumped on his shoulder. "Because I will," he said, fooling his fingers in her hair. "Take off your clothes—and I'll tell it to you good."

In her dressing room there was a table with a three-way mirror. Grady, unclasping a bracelet chain, could see in the mirror every movement of Clyde's in the other room. He undressed quickly, leaving his clothes wherever he happened to be; down to his shorts, he lighted a cigarette and stretched himself, the colors of sun reflecting along his body. Then, smiling toward her, he dropped his shorts and stood in the doorway: "You mean that? That I disgust you?" She shook her head slowly; and he said, "You bet you don't," while the mirror, jarred by the fall of her chair, shot through the dusk arrows of dazzle. ♦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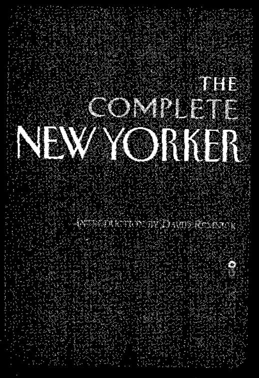
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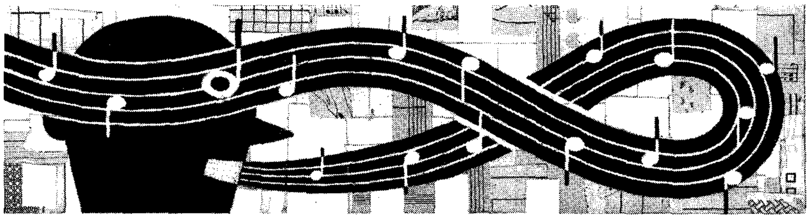


BOOKS

PEOPLE POWER

Revisiting the origins of American democracy.

BY JILL LEPORE

In 1938, if you had a dollar and seventy-two cents, you could buy a copy of "The Rise of American Democracy," a seven-hundred-page hardcover about the size of a biggish Bible or a Boy Scout handbook. While a Bible's worth is hard to measure, the Scout guide, at fifty cents, was an awfully good bargain, and was, in any case, the book you'd most like to have if you were shipwrecked somewhere, not least because it included the chapter "How to Make Fire Without Matches." But "The Rise of American Democracy" promised, invaluably, "to make clear how Americans have come to live and to believe as they do." It was also a quick read. "A Simple Book," its ad copy boasted. "Paragraphs average three to a page. Sentences are short." Better yet: "A Democracy Theme runs through the whole text."

The book's authors, Mabel B. Casner, a Connecticut schoolteacher, and Ralph Henry Gabriel, a Yale professor, set out to make history matter. In a foreword written in the dark days of 1937, when Fascism, not democracy, was on the rise, they offered a sober historian's creed: "We live today in perilous times; so did many of our forefathers. They sometimes made mistakes; let us strive to learn not to repeat these errors. The generations which lived before us left us a heritage of noble ideals; let us hold fast to these." Above all, they wanted American schoolchildren to understand the *idea* of democracy. Gabriel, who went on to write "The Course of American Democratic Thought" and to help found the American Studies Association, was an intellectual historian. But the book is also full of practical teaching tips and "Real life Activities" (tested by Casner in her classroom in West Haven, Connecticut) that were supplied at the end of every chapter, and included instructions for an end-of-year finale—a class play to be performed some cool June afternoon—"The Rise of American Democracy: A Dramatization in Four Scenes." It begins in front of a closed curtain:

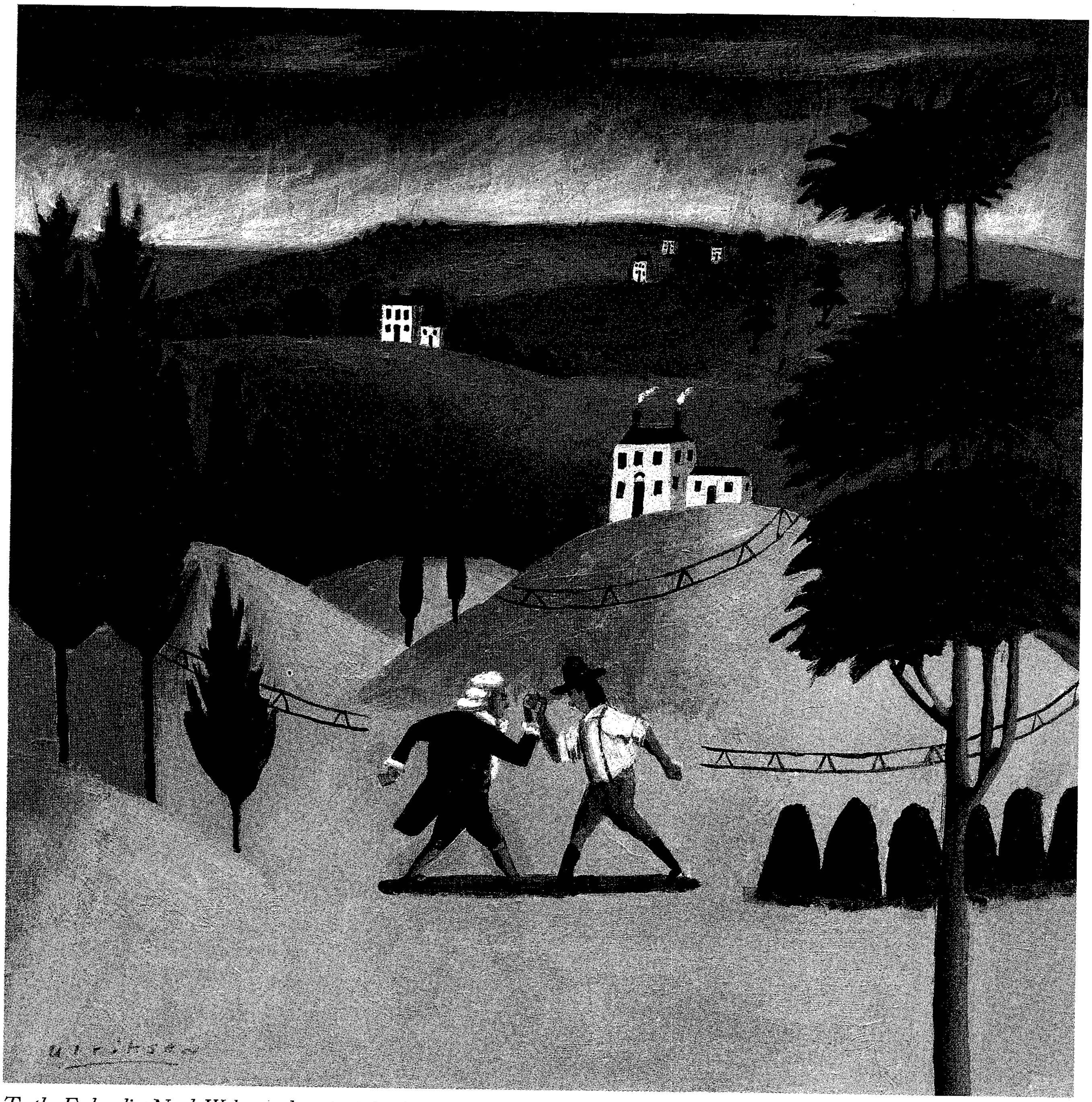
> *Enter* COLUMBIA *from one side and* BOY *from Europe from the opposite side.*
>
> BOY: I am looking for Columbia. Do you know where I could find her?
>
> COLUMBIA: I am she.
>
> BOY (*bowing*): I am happy and honored to make your acquaintance. I come from Europe. I have heard much of your democracy. I have come to you to find out what it is like...
>
> COLUMBIA: I shall be glad to show you. Perhaps the best way is to go on a journey through American history. (*Exit both together.*)

The curtain rises on the Constitutional Convention, where Columbia and the earnest young European watch the delegates conclude their deliberations. But Scene 3, in which Columbia takes her awestruck European student of democracy to "the Western plains in the 1840's" to witness a shambles of bedraggled pioneers scuffling across the stage, is undoubtedly the play's climax, since it combines singing, cowboy costumes, and parts not only for every student but for pets, too, as per the sociable stage direction "*dogs may be added*." While the pioneers hum the tune to "Oh! Susanna," the boy, puzzled, turns to Columbia: "I understand that they are settling your great continent, but I do not understand what they have to do with democracy." To which Columbia replies, "Look at these men and women. They have only a few belongings and simple tools. Yet they are braving the dangers of the wilderness. They are building a democratic nation. Men do not have to have possessions to do great things." No matter if the scenery toppled, if the pioneers tripped in their boots, if the dogs barked and bayed; the audience had been treated to a concise restatement of what was then a dominant interpretation of the rise of American democracy—that it was fuelled by the settling of the frontier and that it chiefly involved the hardscrabble striving of poor white men.

All of which is taken up, and much of it disputed, in Sean Wilentz's new book, also called "The Rise of American Democracy" (Norton), just over a thousand pages, and, while no steal, reasonably priced at thirty-five dollars. Its paragraphs do not average three to a page. Its sentences are not short. But a Democracy Theme does run through the whole text.

In many ways, democracy's rise is baffling. Within the lifetime of, say, Noah Webster, an American born in 1758 and dead by 1843, the proportion of white men who were eligible to vote grew from less than half to nearly all. This sweeping extension of suffrage did not come all at once, with American independence or the ratification of the Constitution. It happened over decades, as new states entering the union adopted new and more democratic constitutions and old states revised theirs to eliminate property requirements for voting and to call for more direct and frequent elections. Meanwhile, the reputation of democracy as a form of government went from unutterably bad to unassailably good.

Well, maybe not quite unassailably. In 1837, Noah Webster vented his disgust at democracy's rise. "It has been a prevailing opinion, even with many of our greatest men, that the *people* can govern themselves, and that a *democracy* is of course a *free government*," he accurately observed. "Such language as this has been in the mouths of our patriots,



To the Federalist Noah Webster, the principle of equal suffrage was "a monstrous inversion of the natural order of society."

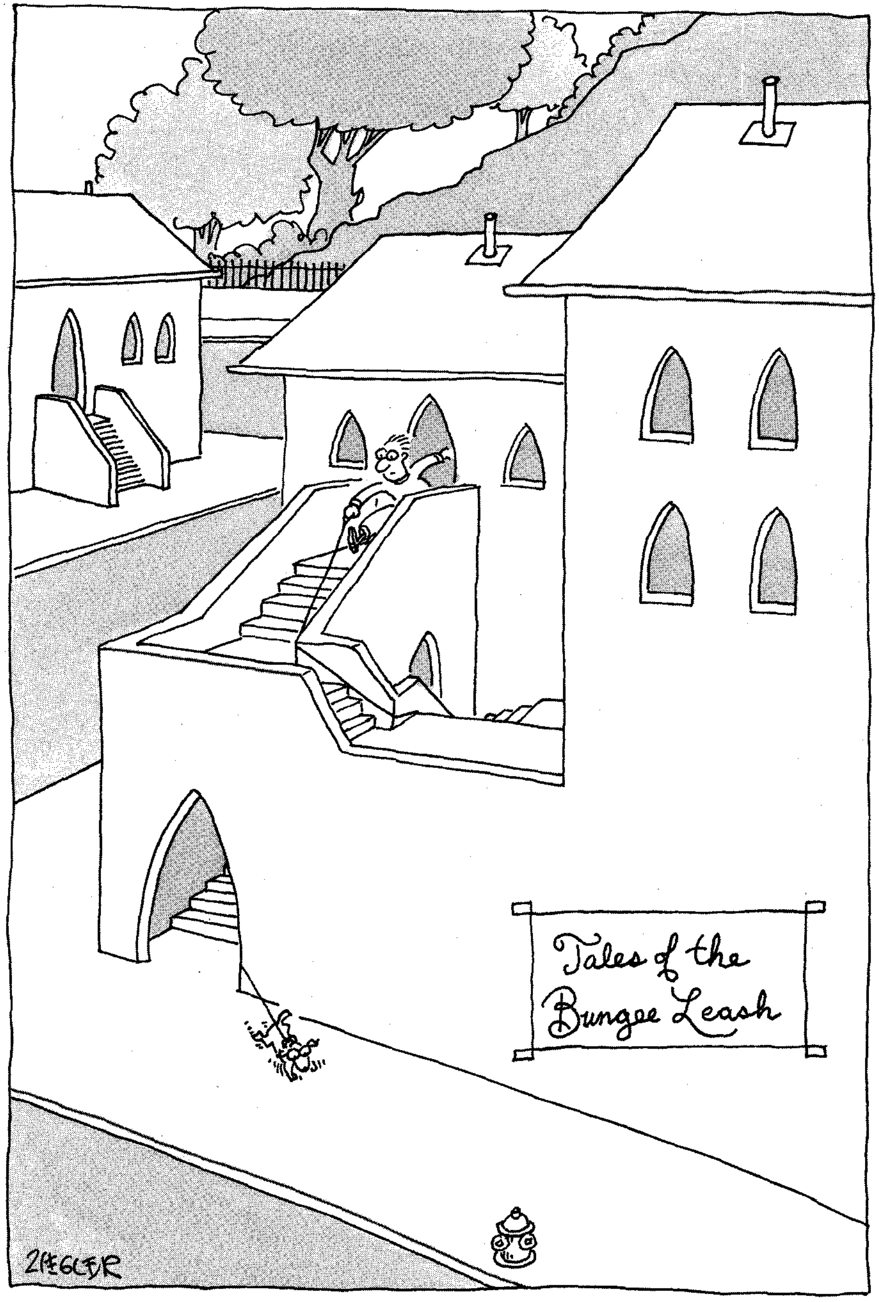
and in the columns of newspapers for thirty or forty years, until it is considered as expressing political axioms of unquestionable truth." As a young man, Webster had made his name writing spelling books and editing staunchly Federalist newspapers. In 1828, he published his magnum opus, "An American Dictionary of the English Language." He was a born definer, not to say a mincer, of words. About the rise of democracy, he complained, "The men who have preached these doctrines have never defined what they mean by the *people*, or what they mean by *democracy*, nor how the *people* are to govern themselves." As Webster saw it, democracy is rule by the people and the people are, generally, insufferable idiots.

> PEOPLE, *n.* . . .
> 2. The vulgar; the mass of illiterate persons.
>
> > The knowing artist may judge better than the *people. Waller.*

"Give the people the *power*, and they are *all tyrants* as much as Kings," he wrote. "They are even more tyrannical; as they are less restrained by a sense of propriety or by principles of honor; more under the control of violent passions, exasperated by envy and hatred of the rich; stimulated to action by numbers; and subject to no responsibility."

As much as Noah Webster professed to loathe the people, so much did Thomas Jefferson profess to love them. Jefferson considered the mass of the American people—farmers—to be the great repository of republican virtue. "Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people," he wrote. In the seventeen-nineties, Jefferson's followers, fiercely fighting Federalist rule, redefined democracy as the Revolution's

MARK ULRIKSEN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legacy, a logic that made Federalism appear inconsistent with the spirit of the Revolution. "He that is not a Democrat is an aristocrat or a monocrat," one Jeffersonian declared. When Jefferson was elected President, in 1800, the Federalists, those rank monocrats, lost control of the government.

Always eager to serve his country, Webster wrote to Jefferson in 1801 offering an exegesis of his inaugural address (on the ground that "surely every sentence of the philosophical Jefferson must carry with it *meaning*"). In his address, Jefferson had declared, "Sometimes it is said that man can not be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the form of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question." As for history, Webster had this answer: "If there ever was a government, which under the *name* of a republic or democracy, was generally guided by eminent wisdom, virtue and talents, it was a government of a mixed kind, in which an *aristocratic* branch existed independent of popular suffrage." After all, Webster asked, "what do men gain by elective governments, if fools and knaves have the same chance to obtain the highest offices, as honest men?"

Jefferson, who considered Webster "a mere pedagogue, of very limited understanding," never replied to his letter, and Webster added the slight to his list of grievances. The list was getting pretty long. As a Connecticut legislator from 1800 to 1807, Webster helped block bills eliminating the property qualification for voting. He himself had earned the right to vote, he was keen to point out, by writing his spelling books and dictionaries: "I am a farmer's son and have collected all the small portion of property which I possess by untiring efforts and labors to promote the literary improvement of my fellow citizens." And he would not have political decisions made for him by men who had no similar stake in the world. "If all men have an equal right of suffrage, those who have *little* and those who have *no* property, have the power of making regulations respecting the property of others," he reasoned. "In truth, this principle of *equal suffrage* operates to produce extreme *inequality of rights*; a monstrous inversion of the natural order of society." If voting-eligibility laws had to be changed, Webster had his own ideas about how to change them. "The people . . . would be more free and more happy," he suggested, "if all were deprived of the right of suffrage until they were 45 years of age, and if no man was eligible to an important office until he is 50."

By the end of the War of 1812, the Federalists had effectively lost any real influence over the American electorate. In the eighteen-twenties and thirties, a new kind of democracy emerged, as the nation expanded and more and poorer white men came to the polls and were elected to office. With the election of that scrappy frontiersman Andrew Jackson, in 1828, Jeffersonianism gave way to Jacksonianism: tied to party, arrayed against moneyed privilege, and advocating economic opportunity. By then, Webster had all but given up on the United States. Had he known what would become of the Republic, he would never have lifted a finger to fight the Revolution. Even George Washington, Webster thought, "would never have opposed the British government" if he could have anticipated the spoils system. Weary of his home state, Webster wished "to be forever delivered from the *democracy* of *Connecticut*." He'd even be willing to make the great sacrifice of moving to Vermont, if that state could "be freed from our *democracy*," adding, "As to the cold winters, I would, if necessary, become a troglodyte and live in a cave."

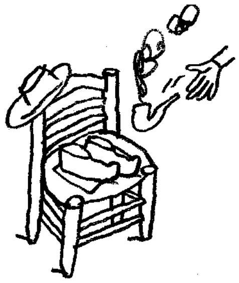
What accounts for the rise of American democracy? The field of explanation—even the phrase itself—is littered with metaphors. "American democracy did not rise like the sun at its natural hour in history," Wilentz wryly observes, dismissing the notion that democracy arrived, fully formed, in 1776 or 1787. To Noah Webster, democracy was a sickness, and the only question was "whether the United States are to suffer all the violence of the disease, or only its milder symptoms." Other early observers of American democracy determined that it had been set in motion by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, like a child's windup toy. Having heard that all men are born free and equal, all men and women, no matter what race, no matter how poor, will eventually seize that freedom. When Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States in 1831, he concluded that American democracy was the unavoidable consequence of Americans' equality. "The more I advanced in the study of American society," he wrote, "the more I perceived that this equality of condition is the fundamental fact from which all others seem to be derived." As he saw it, a nation of men possessed of roughly equal estates and education, and lacking aristocratic titles, must necessarily become a nation of men possessed of roughly equal political rights. "To conceive of men remaining forever unequal upon a single point, yet equal on all others, is impossible; they must come in the end to be equal upon all," he wrote.

Tocqueville's interpretation was largely put aside by later historians, including Frederick Jackson Turner, who treated the subject in a 1903 essay in the *Atlantic*, "Contributions of the West to American Democracy." Turner believed that democracy had everything to do with the land—"this vast shaggy continent of ours"—and offered his own metaphor for the rise of American democracy: "the wind of Democracy blew... from the West." From Colonial days onward, Turner argued, blustery demands for fuller political participation—for local governance, more frequent elections, and broader suffrage—came, always, from frontier settlers chafing at the authority of Eastern élites. "A fool can sometimes put on his coat better than a wise man can do it for him," they told royal governors and, later, state legislators and, above all, the federal government. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution may have been drafted on the shores of the Atlantic, Turner conceded, but they were tested in the foothills of the Alleghenies and beyond. "This, at least, is clear," Turner insisted. "American democracy is fundamentally the outcome of the experiences of the American people in dealing with the West."

Turner's thesis of frontier democracy influenced generations of American historians and decades of American popular culture and more or less dictated Casner and Gabriel's story about the rise of American democracy. Like most good theories, it had a long life as an interpretation before historians began calling it a myth. But Turner's thesis does not shape Wilentz's. "In fact," Wilentz contends, "the West borrowed heavily from eastern examples."

In this, Wilentz, a professor of history at Princeton and a contributing editor of *The New Republic*, follows the elegant work of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who, in "The Age of Jackson," published in 1945, gently observed, "It has seemed that Jacksonian democracy, which has always appeared an obvious example of Western influence in American government, is not perhaps so pat a case as some have thought." Schlesinger argued that the rise of American democracy during the age of Jackson was the result of class struggle in an industrializing economy. For Schlesinger, this was a struggle of ideas—most of all, of *one* idea, that political power can be divorced from property ownership. "It is in vain to talk of Aristocracy and Democracy," a stonecutters unionist declared in 1835. "These terms are too variable and indeterminate to convey adequate ideas of the present opposing interests; the division is between the rich and the poor—the warfare is between them." That war, as Schlesinger described it in a chapter called "Jacksonian Democracy as an Intellectual Movement," was waged as much in politics and the courts as in American letters (perhaps most notably in the *Democratic Review*, a journal founded in 1837 "for the purpose of enlisting Literature, Religion, and Philosophy on the side of Democracy," and whose contributors included Bryant, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Whittier, Whitman, Poe, and Longfellow).

Wilentz's initial foray into the story of democracy's rise came with his first book, "Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850" (1984), in which he argued that urban workers and radicals constituted the truly democratic element in Jacksonianism. Wilentz was criticized for his depiction of manly artisans fighting the good fight (in my dog-eared copy, I found a note, passed to me by a classmate: "Do Wilentz's workers have any vices other than the occasional stiff drink?"), but the book earned him considerable praise. Ironically, it also won the Frederick Jackson Turner Award of the Organization of American Historians.



"The Rise of American Democracy" is, to some degree, "Chants Democratic" writ large. It expands that story both geographically—following democracy's growth among what Wilentz labels "city democrats" and "country democrats"—and chronologically; the book's subtitle is "From Jefferson to Lincoln," a choice that Wilentz is at pains to explain. "By singling out Jefferson and Lincoln, I certainly do not mean to say that presidents and other great men were solely responsible for the vicissitudes of American politics," he writes. That Wilentz, the loving chronicler of nineteenth-century New York workingmen's "shirtless democracy," should become a champion of Presidential history, in any form, is remarkable. But he believes that social historians have lost their way. The problem with social history, he argues, is that it has

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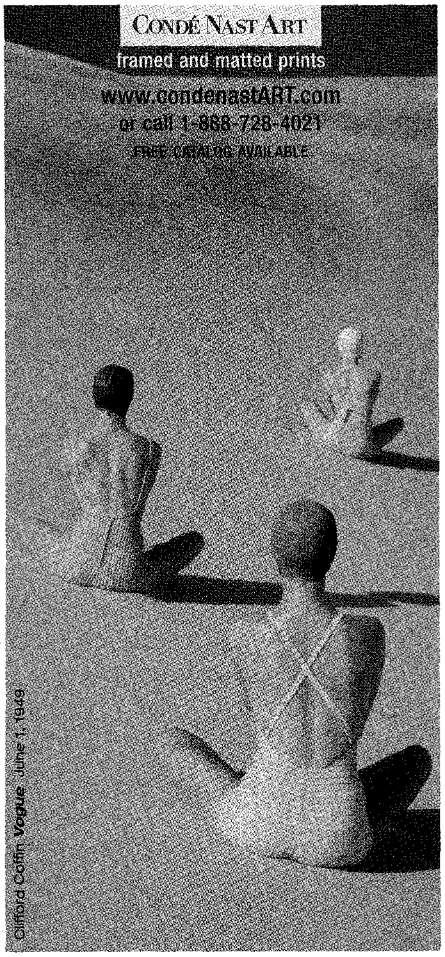

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"generally submerged the history of politics in the history of social change, reducing politics and democracy to byproducts of various social forces." What he's done in "The Rise of American Democracy," and done exceedingly well, is to trace the play between politicians and political ideas, on the one hand, and the people and popular movements, on the other. More metaphors, this time Wilentz's mix: "Just as political leaders did not create American democracy out of thin air, so the masses of Americans did not simply force their way into the corridors of power."

Consider the story of an American slave named, improbably enough, Madison Washington. In the fall of 1841, Washington was serving as a cook on a ship called the Creole, sailing from Virginia with a hundred and thirty-five slaves aboard to be sold in New Orleans as part of the entirely legal coastal slave trade. When the ship neared the Bahamas, he left the ship's mess to lead a group of eighteen slaves in a revolt. They overwhelmed the crew and had the ship steered to Nassau. There the British authorities arrested the rebels and freed the rest of the ship's slaves. Like the Amistad case, two years earlier, the Creole uprising sparked an intense national debate. More important, it sparked a debate in Congress, where discussions of slavery had been silenced by a gag rule put in place by Southern legislators in 1836. Using the Creole controversy to challenge the gag rule, a young Ohio congressman named Joshua Giddings introduced a series of antislavery resolutions in the House in March, 1842, including one calling the Creole rebellion just. A motion to censure Giddings passed, 125 to 69, in a vote that split along sectional, not party, lines. But Giddings won back his seat just a month later, in a special election—in a vote of 7,469 to 393. Even his enemies conceded that Giddings's stunning reëlection was "the greatest triumph ever achieved by a member of this House." As Wilentz writes, "Although the gag rule would not be formally voted down until December 1844, it had, as Giddings later related, 'morally ceased to operate.'"

In telling stories like this, Wilentz recovers the role played by men like Madison Washington in national politics and in democracy's rise. Washington didn't vote to end the gag rule; Giddings did. But Giddings was able to do what he did because Washington did what he did. "Giddings was on the lookout for some way to advance antislavery agitation beyond organizing yet again against the gag rule," Wilentz writes, "but he found it only after the *Creole* rebellion." Together, black rebels, white abolitionists, and antislavery politicians like Giddings forced the discussion of slavery onto the floor of Congress.

Readers may weary at the length of Wilentz's book, but, as a model for integrating social and political history, it's hard to dispute. That it will be disputed is, however, certain, if only because Wilentz has been such a vigorous critic of his colleagues. He has had little use for historians who defend Federalists like Noah Webster. To those who celebrate Federalists for their opposition to slavery, Wilentz counters, "Rarely has any group of Americans done so little to deserve such praise." In his *New Republic* reviews, Wilentz has been particularly indignant about historians who place Federalists in a better light than Republicans or who dismiss Jefferson's entire career because he owned slaves (including some who were almost certainly his own children). David McCullough's "John Adams" was, in his view, "popular history as passive nostalgic spectacle." Garry Wills's book about Jefferson's election, "Negro President," he deemed "misadventurous." In another essay, Wilentz concluded, "Were he alive today, Jefferson would probably regard modern American historians as a rascally bunch."

But one thing that Federalists understood—for all their failings, for all their unmitigated snobbery—was the fragility of democracy. I'd be willing to consider *you* an angel, Webster told Jefferson, if you could show me a democracy that isn't corrupt, or if you could protect the United States from "the instruments with which vicious and unqualified men destroy the freedom of elections, and exalt themselves into power, trampling first on the great and good, and afterwards on the very people to whom they owe their elevation." Webster may have been a prig, but he wasn't a duffer. ♦

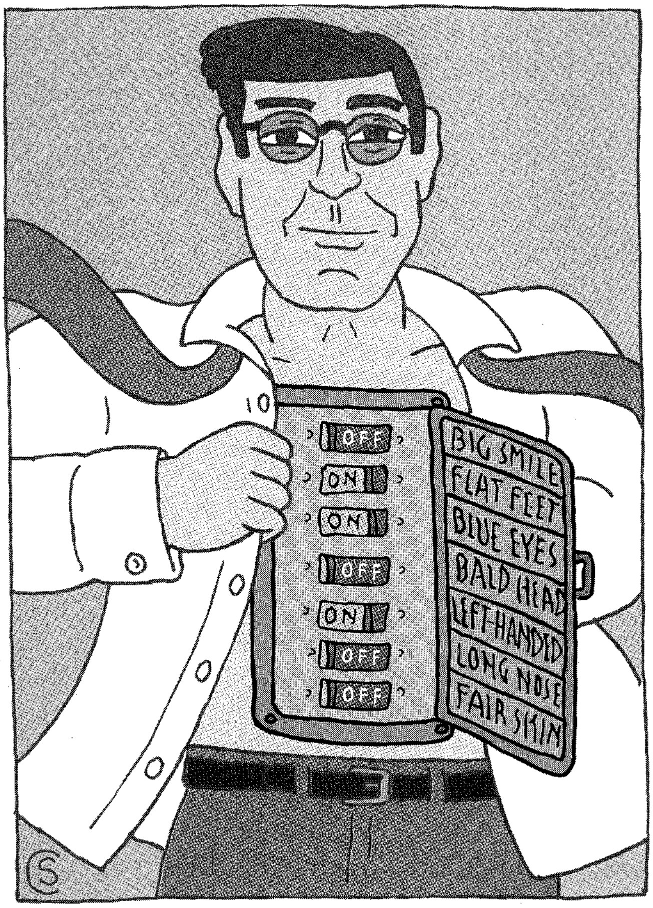
BOOKS

TURNED ON

A revolution in the field of evolution?

BY H. ALLEN ORR

If you read much popular science, you'd be forgiven for thinking that biology has become something of a banana republic. A seemingly endless series of books and newspaper articles reports that biology is being roiled by any number of revolutions. Take your pick: genomics, proteomics, medical genetics, and, now, something called evo devo. Some of the revolutionary rhetoric is surely hype, but these are, undeniably, exciting times in biology. Entire genomes are being decoded at an astounding rate (nearly three hundred species have been done, and more than seven hundred others are in the works), and new high-tech approaches to old problems seem to appear by the week. The result of all this has been some genuinely surprising scientific findings. And some of the biggest have come from the new science of evo devo.



Evolution may be a matter of "switching" genes on and off.

SEYMOUR CHWAST

Evo devo, punk-band-inspired slang for "evolutionary developmental biology," holds the promise of a radical new way to look at life's evolution. Its central thesis is simple. Organisms show two kinds of change through time: during the lifetime of a single animal (you don't look much like the egg you started as) and during the evolutionary history of a biological lineage (you don't look much like your three-and-a-half-billion-year-old ancestor). Evo devo's key claim is that the first kind of change can provide important insights into the second.

The notion that there's a connection between evolution and development—the growth of an organism from a single cell, through an embryo, to an adult—is both natural and old. It was especially popular in the nineteenth century; Ernst Haeckel's law of recapitulation—the proposition that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny"—captured the spirit of the age. In Haeckel's view, the growth of an animal plays out, in speeded-up form, the whole history of life: an egg represents our original single-celled ancestor, an embryo of four cells represents a primitive creature, and so on. The idea that embryology, as developmental biology was then known, reveals important truths about evolution also played a big part in the first real revolution in evolutionary thought: Darwinism. Darwin himself believed that embryology provided powerful evidence of life's descent from a common ancestor, evidence that he laid out in loving detail in "The Origin of Species." Why, Darwin asked, are the embryos of various animals so much more similar than the adults? Why do rudimentary legs appear during the development of some snakes? And why do whale fetuses have teeth, when, as adults, whales "have not a tooth in their heads"? Darwin argued that odd facts like these are far more readily explained by his theory of evolution than by special creation.

In the early twentieth century, though, the new science of genetics nearly killed the old science of embryology. In science, as in everything else, there are opportunity costs. And the cost of working out genetics—of explaining how genes are passed from one generation to the next—was that many biologists abandoned embryology. The result was a biology that was heavy on genes but light on embryos.

By the second revolution in evolutionary thought—the so-called Modern Synthesis of the nineteen-thirties and forties, when Darwin's theory of evolution was fused with Mendel's theory of genetics—development was left out in the cold. The resulting evolutionary theory took a mathematical turn, emphasizing how genes grow more or less common under the influence of quantifiable forces like natural selection. Evolutionists might talk about genes, or about fitness, or about equations that linked the two, but they almost never talked about embryos. And so it was through most of the twentieth century.

But no longer. Although animal development has always seemed one of the most mysterious of biological phenomena—the emergence of an elaborate adult from a formless egg seems almost magical—geneticists and molecular biologists in the nineteen-eighties and nineties worked hard to demystify the process, and made dizzyingly rapid progress. By the start of the new millennium, scientists could explain the complex convolutions of embryos in stunning molecular detail. Today, there's much excited talk among evolutionary biologists about bringing this new understand-

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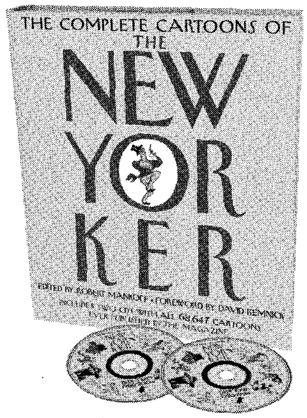

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ing of development to bear on evolution. Indeed, several scientists, including, most prominently, the late paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, have argued that the incipient science of evo devo might represent the next great revolution in the history of evolutionary thought.

Sean Carroll, a professor of biology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a leading evo-devo researcher, surveys the state of the field for a general audience in his book "Endless Forms Most Beautiful" (Norton; $25.95). Though Carroll's book, like much popular science, can be a bit breathless (we're treated to "brave biologists" whose work "gave birth to an exciting new vista"), he does an admirable job of explaining science that was, until now, entombed in technical journals. So just what are these big findings? Not surprisingly, they all hinge on how DNA builds organisms.

DNA is the stuff that gets passed from parent to child, and one of its main jobs is to tell cells how to make proteins, the molecules that we're basically made of. A stretch of DNA that makes a protein is called a gene. Biologists usually say that a gene "codes for" a protein, by which they mean that the gene's DNA sequence instructs a cell to build a specific kind of protein; a slightly different DNA sequence might yield a slightly different protein. One of our genes, for example, codes for insulin, a protein that helps cells absorb glucose. Not all our DNA is given over to genes, though; there are also long stretches of so-called noncoding DNA, which sit between genes. So as we move along a string of DNA, we might first come to a gene, and then to a stretch of noncoding DNA, and then to another gene, and so on. Despite the relative fame of genes and the relative obscurity of noncoding DNA, more than ninety-five per cent of our DNA is noncoding.

Given that nearly all our cells carry the same DNA, you might wonder why your eyes look different from your pancreas. The main reason is that genes don't necessarily make their proteins in every cell. Instead, a particular gene in a particular cell might or might not be "expressed" (that is, switched on, and so making its protein). Part of the reason that your pancreas differs from your eye is that the insulin gene, among others, is expressed only in your pancreas and not in your eye. How particular genes get switched on or off plays an important part in the evo-devo story.

Evo devo's first big finding is that all animals are built from essentially the same genes. In the past few decades, biologists collected thousands of genetic mutations that disrupt the normal course of an embryo's development. (Most of this work involved the humble fruit fly.) By characterizing how particular mutations derail the growth of embryos, biologists were able to figure out which genes control key steps in animal development. In one of the biggest breakthroughs, biologists worked out how fruit-fly embryos decide which of their ends should be the head, which the tail, and what should go between. Part of the answer involves what are called *Hox* genes. Different *Hox* genes get expressed in different parts of a fly's body, and each *Hox* gene tells that body part what appendage it should grow. A *Hox* gene expressed in the head, for example, might tell the head to grow antennae, while a *Hox* gene expressed in the body might tell the body to grow legs. If you tinker experimentally with *Hox* genes, you get the stuff of B movies: mutant flies, for example, that have legs, not antennae, growing out of their heads.

But the truly surprising thing about *Hox* genes turns out to be evolutionary. All animals have *Hox* genes, and nearly all animals use their *Hox* genes to determine which appendage should go where along the axis that runs from head to tail. Given that the major animal groups, among them arthropods (now including insects), mollusks (snails), annelids (worms), and chordates (human beings), were in place at the start of the Cambrian period, *Hox* genes must be at least half a billion years old.

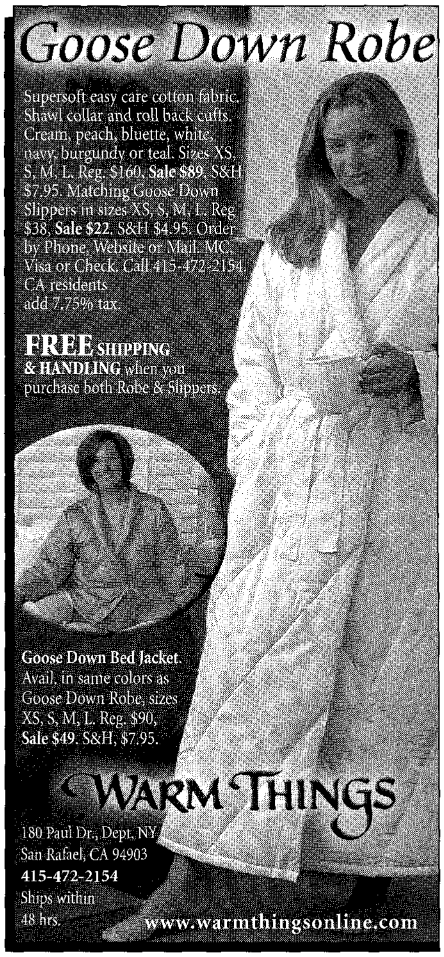
What's more, plenty of important genes turn out to be this old. We now know that several hundred genes, including the *Hox* genes, are needed to lay out an animal's basic design. Carroll calls these the "tool kit" genes, and they're the central characters in his story. Nearly all tool-kit genes are present in all animals, and they do much the same thing in all animals. The same gene, for example, that triggers eye development in fruit flies also triggers eye development in mice. Indeed, genetically engineered flies will happily build eyes if supplied only with the mouse gene. (They build fly eyes, not mouse eyes.) Similarly, a gene that affects pigmentation in birds like the chicken and the bananaquit also affects pigmentation in mammals like the jaguar and you. Indeed, changes in bird-plumage color often involve the same gene that causes red hair in humans. This surprising genetic conservatism across nearly all animals is evo devo's key empirical finding: swans, swallowtails, and socialites are all built from the same genes.

Why, then, do different creatures look so different? How do penguins and people emerge from the same genes? Evo devo's answer to this question represents its second big finding. Different animal designs reflect the use of the same old genes, but expressed at different times and in different places in the organism. As embryos, penguins might express one combination of genes in their limbs (and the result is wings), while people might express another (and the result is arms).

The basis of this selective expression involves that part of the DNA which is noncoding. Most genes, like most light fixtures, have "switches" near them. These switches, which are made of DNA, affect only whether a gene is on in a particular cell at a particular time; they do not change the actual protein coded by a gene. One switch might specify whether a gene should be on in the pancreas and another whether it should be on in adults. What's special about many of those tool-kit genes is that they make proteins that toggle these switches. If a tool-kit protein finds and binds to a switch, it insures, through a complex molecular choreography, that a certain gene is expressed (or, in some cases, not expressed). In effect, tool-kit proteins act like molecular fingers, reaching out and physically turning on or off the switches that sit next to genes. And, just as a human finger might turn many different light switches on or off, so a single tool-kit protein might switch many genes on or off. In the end, the logic of animal development involves a long cascade: tool-kit genes effectively switch other genes on or off, some of which then switch yet other genes on or off, and so it continues throughout the assembly of an adult. If all goes well, each of the possibly trillions of cells in an animal's body will express just the right genes: insulin in your pancreas, not in your eye.

The real excitement about evo devo, however, has to do with its third claim. Carroll and others have taken the next, and by far the most radical, step and argue that evolution is *mostly* a matter of throwing these switches. There's certainly some evidence for this idea. In one well-known example, a group of researchers identified a small region of DNA that causes a striking difference between two kinds of stickleback fish. The kind that lives in the Pacific Ocean has spiky spines on its pelvis; lake stickleback, which evolved at the end of the last Ice Age, lack these spines, probably because they're no longer needed to defend against oceanic predators. This difference in anatomy is genetic—ocean fish grow spines no matter what kind of water they're reared in—and it appears to be due to a single gene, *Pitx1*. Remarkably, though, *Pitx1* produces precisely the same protein in both ocean and lake fish. So why do they look different? Because, out of all the tissues that normally express *Pitx1*—head, trunk, pelvis, and tail—the pelvis of lake fish stopped expressing it. Ten thousand years ago or so, a mutation occurred at a DNA switch near *Pitx1* and pelvic spines disappeared from lake fish.

Evo devo's emphasis on switch-throwing represents a profound departure from evolutionary biology's long obsession with genes. Animal evolution works not so much by changing genes, Carroll maintains, but by changing when and where a conserved set of genes is expressed. In the lingo, evolution is regulatory (involving patterns of gene expression), not structural (involving the precise proteins coded by genes). You can think of this distinction in terms of those light switches. Imagine two houses that were built from the same blueprint and that were initially identical. But now, years later, we notice that they look different at night. In one, the first floor is bright and the second floor dim; in the other, the opposite is true. This difference could have arisen in two ways. Maybe the houses now feature different lights; the owners of the first house might, for in-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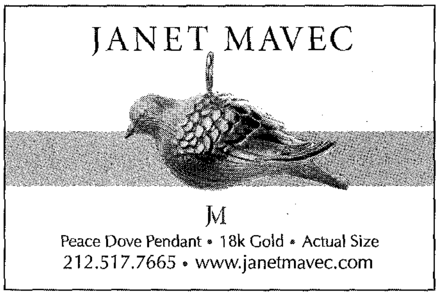
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stance, have replaced bulbs on the first floor with brighter ones; the other owners might have done the same thing on the second floor. But maybe—and this is the evo-devo picture—the owners of the first house have switched on most first-floor lights and switched off most second-floor lights; the owners of the second house might have done the reverse. Evo devo tells us that animal species look different not because their structural bits and pieces have changed but because they switch on and off the same old bits and pieces in different combinations. Roughly speaking, then, penguins and people differ for the same reason your pancreas and eye differ: they're expressing different genes.

In the evo-devo view, animals still adapt to their environments by Darwin's natural selection, but adaptation involves a different kind of genetic change from what biologists used to assume. As a result, evolutionists may need to abandon what Carroll calls their "protein-centric perspective" and look instead to the poorly understood noncoding DNA that sits between genes. Evo devo's advocates argue that switch-throwing also makes good evolutionary sense. If a gene itself were to change, its altered protein would show up in every tissue that expresses the gene, and the new protein probably wouldn't work well in some tissue. If a switch were to change, though, the same old protein would show up in all the usual tissues except one. This kind of "modular" change is far less likely to wreak havoc on an organism and so is much more likely to be used by evolution. Indeed, evolution likes modular change for the same reason engineers do: while changing all the metal in an airplane to some new alloy would be asking for trouble, switching the metal in the bathroom door handle to the new alloy would probably go fine.

The idea that animal diversity reflects switch-throwing might also help to explain how so many different kinds of animals emerge from so few genes. Vertebrates, including human beings, carry only around twenty-five thousand genes (before the genome was decoded, scientists typically guessed that there would be around a hundred thousand); most other animals carry even fewer. How does nature squeeze so many kinds of creatures out of such a modest genetic endowment? The answer, according to evo devo, is combinatoric explosion. Although thousands of genes might not sound like enough to explain the almost unimaginable diversity of what are, after all, the most sophisticated machines in the known universe, the number of combinations in which these genes can be expressed (gene 1 with gene 2, but not with genes 3, 4, 5, etc.) is nearly boundless. In other words, there are many species for the same reason that there are many sentences: you might know only a few thousand words, but you probably don't lose sleep over the prospect of running out of sentences.

What Carroll calls the "Evo Devo Revolution" hasn't been greeted with universal enthusiasm. The main worry that skeptics raise is that the empirical evidence for evo devo's claims remains somewhat limited. Studies like those in the stickleback are notoriously hard to perform, and there are very few cases where we can point to the genetic changes that underlie the evolution of animal form. Although experiments so far suggest that evolutionary changes at switches are fairly common, it's not yet clear whether they're the norm. Indeed, the biologists Marc Kirschner and John Gerhart argue in their new book, "The Plausibility of Life" (Yale; $30), that the sort of regulatory changes that Carroll and others play up are less than universal. While they're generally sympathetic to evo devo, Kirschner and Gerhart discuss several cases where evolution has involved good old-fashioned change at genes. And Carroll himself acknowledges important exceptions to his view.

One of the biggest involves our own lineage, the vertebrates. We now know that the rise of the vertebrates, some five hundred and twenty million years ago, was marked by two separate doublings of the entire genome. Vertebrates, in other words, suddenly found themselves with four times as many genes as their predecessors. Natural selection seized upon this new material and drove the evolution of novel functions at many of these genes. Evo devo's claim that evolution is a matter of throwing switches at the same old genes fails conspicuously here. Vertebrates are who they are—a large group of spectacularly complex beasts—because of evolution at all those thousands of new genes. Though Carroll concedes this, he maintains that vertebrate evolution since those genomic doublings involved switches. Still, the rise of vertebrates is a big case to lose. In the end, it seems fair to say that, while most evolutionists believe that switches provide an important substrate for evolution—and I, for one, suspect the evo-devo view may prove right—some remain unconvinced that switches are the mainstay of evolution.

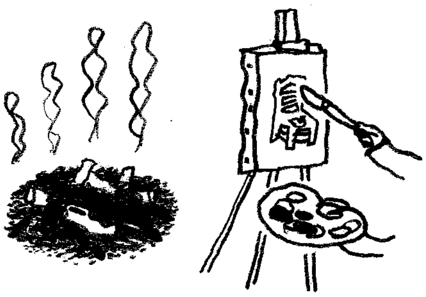
A second concern is more philosophical. Even if all the scientific claims made by evo devo are justified, is it really a revolution? Naturally, it depends on what you mean by "revolution." If you mean major progress, breakthroughs that add considerably to our understanding, who could argue? But some scientists seem to have in mind something more like a paradigm shift of the sort popularized by Thomas Kuhn in "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions." In such a shift, an old and familiar way of looking at things gets swept aside by a radically new one. The Darwinian revolution was certainly something like this: one could not look at biology in the same way after Darwin. And the Modern Synthesis, the second defining moment in the history of evolutionary biology, came close: it's hard to think of evolution in the same way once you know that it has to obey the laws of Mendel's genetics.

But evo devo doesn't seem quite in this league. The ideas that Carroll champions wouldn't undermine other, more traditional, ways of thinking of evolution. Even in the evo-devo account, change in animal form still involves change in DNA sequence and change in Darwinian fitness—just as evolutionary biologists assumed in all their equations over the past half-century. So it's hard to see how evo devo could supplant these other approaches. The point isn't that evo devo is not important; it surely is. For the first time, we have a good understanding of how particular changes in DNA cause particular changes in embryos, which, in turn, cause particular changes in species. The point is that not all significant science turns our world upside down. Despite the nearly irresistible romance of the scientific revolution, the history of evolutionary biology might end up looking a lot more like evo devo's own history of the animal kingdom: a few radical innovations early on, followed by some intensely interesting tinkering. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

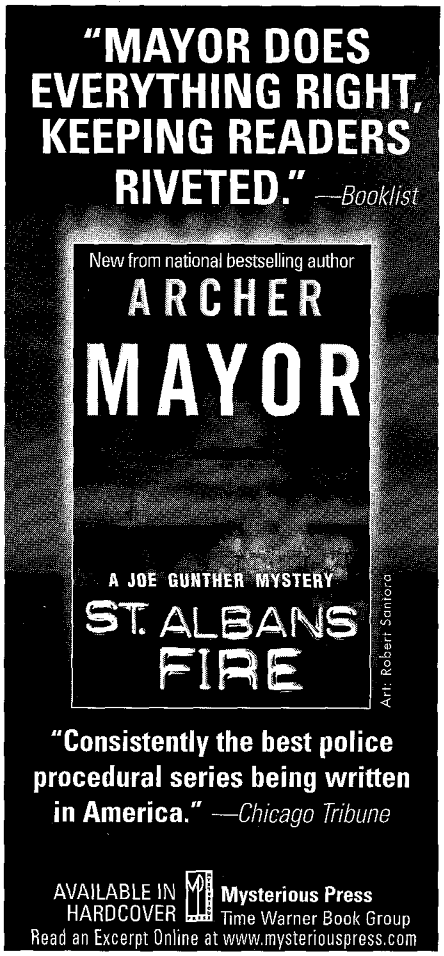
Vita, *by Melania G. Mazzucco, translated from the Italian by Virginia Jewiss (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25).* Mazzucco's intermittently commanding and moving epic about the Italian immigrant experience tells the story of two children from a rural village in southern Italy amid the fetid slums of New York, circa 1903. Diamante, aged twelve, is the author's paternal grandfather, and Mazzucco mixes fact with fiction in an attempt to imagine the life of his nine-year-old cousin Vita, a girl "with a great mass of dark hair and deep dark eyes." Some of the more factual sections flag (such as those describing the Italian campaign in the Second World War), but in the early, imaginative parts the narrative is full of pungent fictional details, like Vita in her boarding house making artificial flowers, and Diamante loading bodies on a cart at a funeral parlor and measuring them for coffins.

Veronica, *by Mary Gaitskill (Pantheon; $23).* Gaitskill's second novel is narrated over the course of a single day by an ailing former fashion model named Alison, now cleaning offices for a living, who ruminates on her glamorous youth and on her friendship with an older woman who died of AIDS. Her recollections range through the bohemian San Francisco of the late nineteen-seventies, the fashion worlds of Paris and New York in the eighties, and her family's claustrophobic but comforting home in suburban New Jersey. Gaitskill's distinctive prose often traverses decades and continents in a single paragraph, in a way that is more montage than narrative. When this ambitious approach succeeds, it yields startling revelations; when it doesn't quite come off, the result is a pleasant muddle. Recalling San Francisco prostitutes, Alison says, "Most of them weren't beautiful girls, but they had a special luster." An analogous allure pervades this book.



A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599, *by James Shapiro (HarperCollins; $27.95).* Instead of relying on the meagre evidence about Shakespeare's personal life, Shapiro's biography examines how public events left their mark on the four plays—"Henry V," "Julius Caesar," "As You Like It," and "Hamlet"—that Shakespeare wrote during 1599, the year in which the thirty-five-year-old playwright "went from being an exceptionally talented writer to one of the greatest who ever lived." The approach proves illuminating for the overtly political plays. Lines in "Henry V" allude to a rebellion in Ireland that Elizabeth I had recently sent the Earl of Essex to suppress. Chapters on "As You Like It" and "Hamlet" revert to more conventional textual analysis, interlarded with biographical speculations and digressions; for instance, Rosalind's journey to Arden may derive from Shakespeare's annual trip to Stratford to see his wife and daughters, and the "limbs with travel tired" of the twenty-seventh sonnet perhaps reflect the poor condition of English highways.

The Tender Bar, *by J. R. Moehringer (Hyperion; $23.95).* In the mid-seventies, Moehringer, aged nine, first entered Dickens, a smoky Long Island pub. Through the next decades it became, variously, his hideout, "holy place," surrogate father, and "security blanket." But, perhaps as a result of his reverence for the place—and despite his assurances that he can accurately recall drunken conversations long past—scenes there often feel contrived and mawkish. The stronger episodes in this memoir, such as an endearing series of failures while working as a *Times* copyboy, take place away from Dickens's hazy influence. Revering a bar had other dangers, too; Moehringer eventually becomes unhappy with his drinking habits and decides that "growing up" means "sobering up." The bar had started to seem like a "submarine trapped on the ocean floor."



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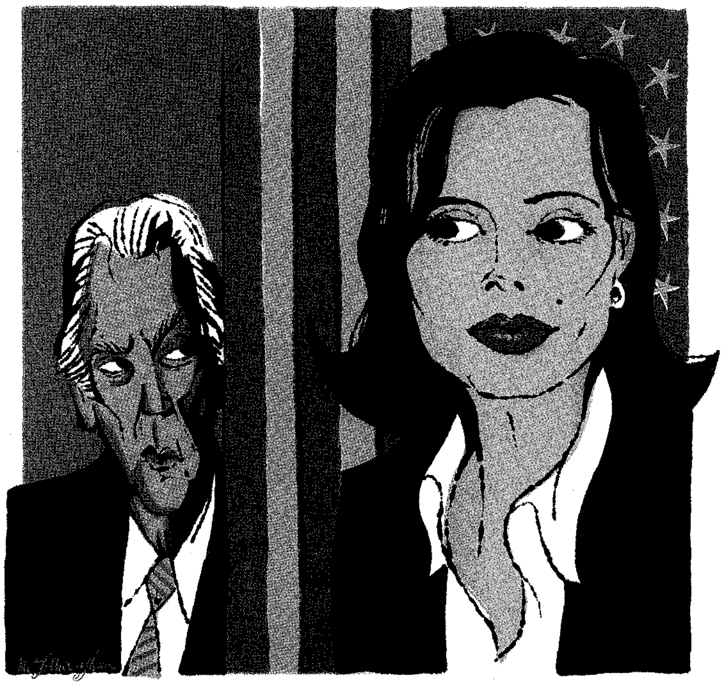
BIG MAC

At long last, a woman in the White House.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

Although "Commander in Chief," the new ABC series starring Geena Davis as the first woman President, is a hit on its own merits (merits that include a satisfying element of soap opera), it may get an extra shot of ratings oxygen from the country's growing curiosity about a certain woman senator—curiosity about whether she will run for President and whether there's a chance that she could win. No one seems to be able to talk about "Commander in Chief" without also talking about Hillary Clinton, whose name is invariably followed these days by the phrase "who may or may not run for President in 2008." Even before the show began, it was being discussed as though its primary purpose were to pave the way for a woman to be President, sooner rather than later; in fact, it's reality that paved the way for "Commander in Chief." Not so long ago, a show about a woman President would have been a sitcom; it's only the genuine possibility that a woman (not necessarily Clinton, and not necessarily in 2008) could hold that job that makes such a show dramatically credible.



Donald Sutherland and Geena Davis in "Commander in Chief."

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

It's reasonable to say that the success of "The West Wing" also opened doors for "Commander in Chief." That show imbued politics and the Presidency with deep glamour; it made viewers believe that they could make a difference in politics and that politics could bring out the latent noble public servant in them. ("The West Wing" 's midlife crisis may also have provided an early lesson for ABC's show. Two years ago, "The West Wing" 's prodigious creator, Aaron Sorkin, who wrote virtually every episode and strained the show's budget—and NBC's patience—with delays, left under a cloud. Earlier this month, after only two episodes of "Commander in Chief" had been broadcast, it was announced that the estimable Steven Bochco would be coming in to take over from the show's creator, Rod Lurie, who is best known for writing and directing the 2000 movie "The Contender." Lurie, it appeared, had contracted a case of Sorkin's disease: he had not only written four of the seven episodes that had been shot so far but directed all seven. At one point, the studio had to shut down production on the show to accommodate the delays he caused.)

"Commander in Chief"—like "The West Wing"—has political insiders on its team (one of the producers, Steven A. Cohen, was Hillary Clinton's deputy communications director when she was First Lady), and they and Lurie were smart enough to open the series with Davis's character already just a heartbeat away from the Presidency—and inarguably entitled to the position should it come to that, which it does only a few minutes into the first episode. We're spared the misery of an election campaign—does anyone doubt that the first Presidential campaign with a viable female candidate, in addition to being exciting, is bound to be excruciating in a million ways?—and of trying to establish that this Commander-in-Chief is more than simply a "Woman Running for President," as Gail Collins, the *Times*' editorial-page editor, recently summed up the real-world predicament of women in politics. Davis's Mackenzie Allen is already Vice-President; President Teddy Bridges (Will Lyman), a Republican, chose her as his running mate in order to improve his standing with women voters, despite the fact that she's not a member of his party—she's an Independent. When Bridges suffers a massive stroke, his chief of staff, Jim Gardner (Harry Lennix), gives Allen the news, and then says, with a patronizing first-person plural, "We need you to resign, Mac." The Republicans in the Administration want the Speaker of the House, Nathan Templeton (Donald Sutherland), to step up, as does Templeton himself; and it becomes clear, when Allen talks to the President on his deathbed, that he, too, "needs" her to resign, because, he says, they have different visions of America.

Too bad! Because Mac don't play that game. Actually, she is on the verge of making way for Templeton when he foolishly says something piggish to her. He refers to a Nigerian woman who is about to be executed for the crime of adultery, and whose case Allen has championed, as "a lady who couldn't keep her legs together." Allen, staring at him, her face impassive, slowly lowers her resignation speech to the table beside her, never to pick it up again. (It's the kind of scene that makes movie audiences cheer and clap.) As befits an actress who almost became an Olympic archer in the 2000 Games, Davis gives Allen a poise and a focus that are never less than Presidential. Even if it doesn't take guts to put on a drama that envisions a woman as President, it does take some to bring up as a central issue a human-rights case that has to do with women, and is a "softer" issue than, say, developing nuclear weapons. Still, the show gets to have it both ways. Allen is worried that the woman's execution will be hastened if she becomes President, so before she's sworn in she has the Joint Chiefs come up with a bold, Ramboesque rescue plan involving the threat of serious deadly force if the prisoner isn't released.

Of course, once the prisoner is released that's pretty much the end of it; there are no consequences, as far as "Commander in Chief" is concerned. It's morning in America again. It is probably too soon in the series to expect to see more complexity, or some sense of the grinding difficulty of the job of President, and the number of no-win situations that present themselves every day in the Oval Office. But "Commander in Chief" really does make things look too easy: all Mackenzie Allen has to do is rise to the occasion and the problem goes away. In the third episode, for instance, she O.K.s a neat proposal to overthrow an illegitimate dictator in Latin America, stop the drug trade from his country, and restore an elected leader to power. We should probably cut "Commander in Chief" some slack, though. Allen is still settling into the job, and her choice for Vice-President hasn't even been confirmed yet. She shows further wisdom and savvy in this matter: she picks Warren Keaton (Peter Coyote), a highly respected retired general, who, we find out in a flashback, was a rival Vice-Presidential candidate in the last election. Coyote, who often plays the evildoer, here cedes the territory to Sutherland, a scheming villain who couldn't be more hilariously transparent. When Allen is sworn in, his face, as he stands next to her, looks pained and disgusted, as if he had swallowed a spider. If he could get away with it, he'd tie her to the railroad tracks.

So far, Allen's most strenuous tests have come at home. Her family—her husband, Rod Calloway (Kyle Secor, rounding out the quartet of extremely tall principals), and her three children—has had to move from the Vice-Presidential quarters into the White House, and the two older kids, teen-age fraternal twins, are besieged by the press when they return to school. Horace (Matt Lanter) doesn't mind, but Becca (Caitlin Wachs) feels bruised and angry about the new constraints on her life—she says to her brother, sullenly, "You get to be John-John and I'll be Patti Davis." After a rough first day back at school, Becca needs some Mom time, but Mom is about to address the nation. (An unexpected twist in this family is that Becca is a Republican, and doesn't think that her mother should take over as President unless she can promote Bridges's agenda.) Little Amy (Jasmine Anthony), still in elementary school, seems not to mind the upheaval, though we see that loneliness is just around the corner for her. In the third episode, in a touching (albeit preposterous) scene, Amy and Bridges's young son, Tommy, are standing in the big, empty East Room in front of a portrait of George Washington, their nannies at their side, and Tommy tells her that now that her mother is President she'll never see her again. (Tommy and Mrs. Bridges are still living at the White House. Don't ask.)

Allen's thorniest family problem has to do with her husband, the new First Gentleman. Early on, "Commander in Chief" gives the audience a rare wink; we first see Rod accompanying Allen when she's informed of Bridges's stroke, and when he interjects something she cuts him off. He has been identified on the screen as "Rod Calloway, Chief of Staff to the Vice President," and several scenes go by before we learn that he's Allen's husband, and suddenly we have to think about what we think about that. I'm sorry to have to say that I don't care about Rod Calloway, as a husband or as a character, because, um, he isn't the President. "The West Wing" found a way, fictionally at least, to change the role of the First Lady—she is a doctor, and her official duties are few—though such a prospect didn't sit well with the press when Howard Dean, whose wife is also a doctor and didn't accompany him on the campaign trail, ran for President. Given the reported fragility of men's egos, it would seem that the only person suitable for the job of First Gentleman is someone who has already been President himself. Hey . . . that gives me an idea. ♦

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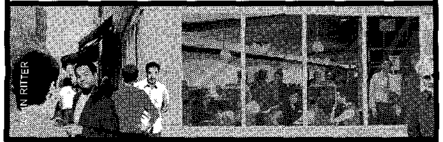

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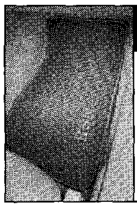
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FRESH FACES

City Opera's fall season.

BY ALEX ROSS

New York City Opera opened in February, 1944, at the height of the battles of Anzio and Truk. If skeptics thought it frivolous to start an opera company in the middle of a world war, Fiorello LaGuardia straightened them out: the music-loving Mayor believed that opera was essential to city life, and he wanted lower- and middle-class New Yorkers to have it at affordable prices, without pretension. The company was then part of City Center, on West Fifty-fifth Street, which now concentrates on dance and musical theatre. The composer-critic Deems Taylor called the City Center Opera "democracy in action, a democracy realizing the work of the individual." Tickets started at eighty-five cents—nine and a half dollars, in today's currency—and topped out at $2.20. These days, you have to pay quite a bit more to get through the doors of what LaGuardia dubbed "the people's opera company." Tickets go up to a hundred and twenty dollars, which is more than most orchestra seats for "Spamalot."

Don't blame City Opera for falling short of its populist mission. The politics of Lincoln Center, where the company moved in 1966, killed that dream. The new complex had two large-scale theatres: the Metropolitan Opera House and the New York State Theatre. The second was designed for New York City Ballet, but another tenant was needed to fill out the season. If City Opera had not used the space, Martin Sokol explains in his history of the house, the Met would probably have started a secondary company, driving it out of business. So City Opera had little choice but to move in, and, once it did, ticket prices shot up. Many great things have happened at the State Theatre since—Beverly Sills's bel-canto tours de force, Christopher Keene's explorations of modernist music drama, recent art-diva turns by Lorraine Hunt Lieberson and Lauren Flanigan—but the house has never found an identity as strong as the one that LaGuardia and other city leaders forged.

At the start of this season, City Opera made a gesture toward returning to its roots. It presented two shows under the slogan "Opera-for-All," with every ticket priced at twenty-five dollars. One show featured the opera-friendly pop star Rufus Wainwright alongside City Opera regulars; the other offered "Madama Butterfly." The people came: both shows sold out. How the company could permanently cut prices across the board without running a catastrophic deficit is difficult to imagine, but one thing seems fairly certain: a twenty-five-dollar-a-seat opera house wouldn't have to work very hard to sell out.

Since 1996, City Opera has been led by Paul Kellogg, a courtly and canny administrator. Kellogg recently announced that he will retire at the end of next season. Now sixty-eight, he says that he lacks the energy to keep working fifteen-hour days, much of it spent on fund-raising and marketing. He may also be weary of the city politics in which the company became embroiled three years ago, after it bid to join an arts center at Ground Zero. That plan came to nothing, along with most high hopes for the site. City Opera is still looking to build its own house, perhaps on Amsterdam Avenue near Juilliard.

The Ground Zero setback aside, the Kellogg era at City Opera has been stable and successful—a model balancing act. Productions have followed a sensible formula, breaking down into approximately five categories: stagings of Handel and other Baroque operas, wavering between wit and camp; mildly revisionist productions of Mozart, Rossini, Verdi, and Puccini, with young, gifted, good-looking American singers (Rossini's "Il Viaggio a Reims" was a hit this fall); offbeat twentieth-century fare

Cheryl Evans, Maria Kanyova, Allyson McHardy, and Heather Buck revel in Rossini. Photograph by Yelena Yemchuk.

(Strauss's "Capriccio," Paul Dukas's "Ariane et Barbe-Bleue," and Richard Rodney Bennett's "The Mines of Sulphur"); new opera of the not too demanding sort (Rachel Portman's "The Little Prince" arrives in November); and stylish incursions into operetta and musical theatre (Gilbert and Sullivan's "Patience," this fall).

"Il Viaggio a Reims" is the last and possibly the giddiest of Rossini's Italian comedies. It depicts onstage the very occasion that it was commissioned to honor: the coronation of Charles X, in 1825, and the gathering of international notables to celebrate it. (Picture, if you will, a contemporary opera commissioned for a Presidential inauguration and set at the Inaugural Ball.) Allen Moyer's sets evoked a goofy but stylish imperial spa, and James Robinson supplied fluid direction. The female leads—Cheryl Evans, Heather Buck, Allyson McHardy, and Maria Kanyova—were at the heart of the action, working hard to master Rossini's florid style and enjoying themselves immensely in the process. Javier Abreu stood out among the men, with his richly ringing tenor. George Manahan, City Opera's music director, led a performance of self-effacing excellence; the orchestra is a much sharper unit than it was a decade ago.

City Opera has done well by the operas of Richard Strauss in the past; in 1999, it presented a riveting production of "Intermezzo," with Flanigan tearing into the role of a famous German musician's wife. Last year, though, it put on a maddeningly grim version of Strauss's "Daphne," and the new "Capriccio" was even grimmer. The work is Strauss's farewell to opera, a sublimely self-conscious meditation on the nature of the art. It was first heard in Nazi Germany, in 1942, a fact that the director, Stephen Lawless, did not let us forget. George Mosley, who sang the role of the Count, had to imitate Hitler's oratorical gestures, and a bust of Gluck in one scene looked like the one that Goebbels sent to Strauss for his birthday. The sets were at once dour and tacky; we came to terms with the German past by staring at ugly furniture. Pamela Armstrong didn't have the right soprano gleam for the central role of the Countess, but she lent warmth to a chilly show. Eric Halfvarson, as the director La Roche, ignored the "context" and revelled in the gruff, wise personality of his character.

The notion of reviving "Ariane et Barbe-Bleue" was lovely on paper. This is an opera that the Met is unlikely to revisit, unless Plácido Domingo embarks upon a new career as a French soprano. "Ariane," first heard in 1907, tells the tale of Bluebeard and his dungeon of wives, but, unlike so many early-twentieth-century works, including Bartók's "Bluebeard's Castle," it allows its female protagonist a measure of freedom; Ariane, the sixth wife, walks free in the end, having tried and failed to liberate the others. The score takes off from Debussy's "Pelléas et Mélisande"—the libretto is by Maurice Maeterlinck, the poet of "Pelléas"—but it finds an opulent sound-world all its own. It interested composers as various as Strauss (who conducted it in 1935), Puccini (the opening notes of "Turandot" can be heard here), and Dukas's devoted student Olivier Messiaen (who admired the synesthetic color-coding of harmonies). Alas, the performance marched along where it should have glided. Leon Botstein conducted at too unvarying a tempo, and Renate Behle was miscast as Ariane; she sounded like Isolde with a power drill.

However the productions turn out, it's satisfying to watch the progress of City Opera's singers, some of whom are still making their way through the early stages of an opera career. One is Carla Thelen Hanson, who had taken several years off to start a family. She came to the house last year as a cover singer, and got a quick promotion to Tosca: her dark-grained, strongly felt "Vissi d'arte" sailed right up to the uppermost balcony, where I was sitting. The role of Bluebeard in Dukas's opera is actually a small one, but Ethan Herschenfeld made the most of it, giving a sharp portrait of a dark, wounded spirit. And Kevin Burdette, playing the self-infatuated poet Archibald in "Patience," showed off his plummy, Thomas Hampson-like voice—was he doing an impersonation, perchance?—and also his phenomenal agility. He held his own in a giddy song-and-dance routine with the West End veteran Michael Ball. I'm told that Burdette is deciding between a career in opera and law. As James Joyce's wife once said of her husband, he should stick to the singing. ♦

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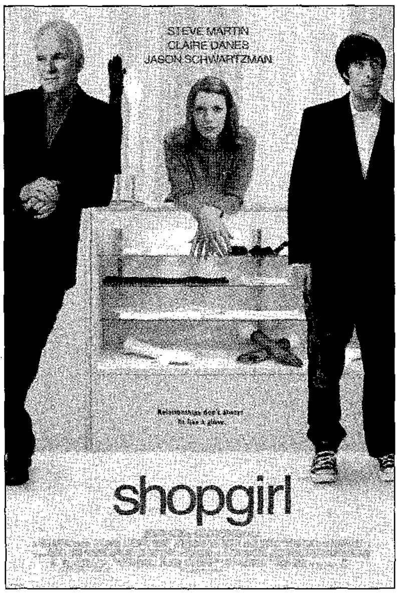

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DANCING

PAPER TIGER

Michael Flatley in a new step-dancing extravaganza.

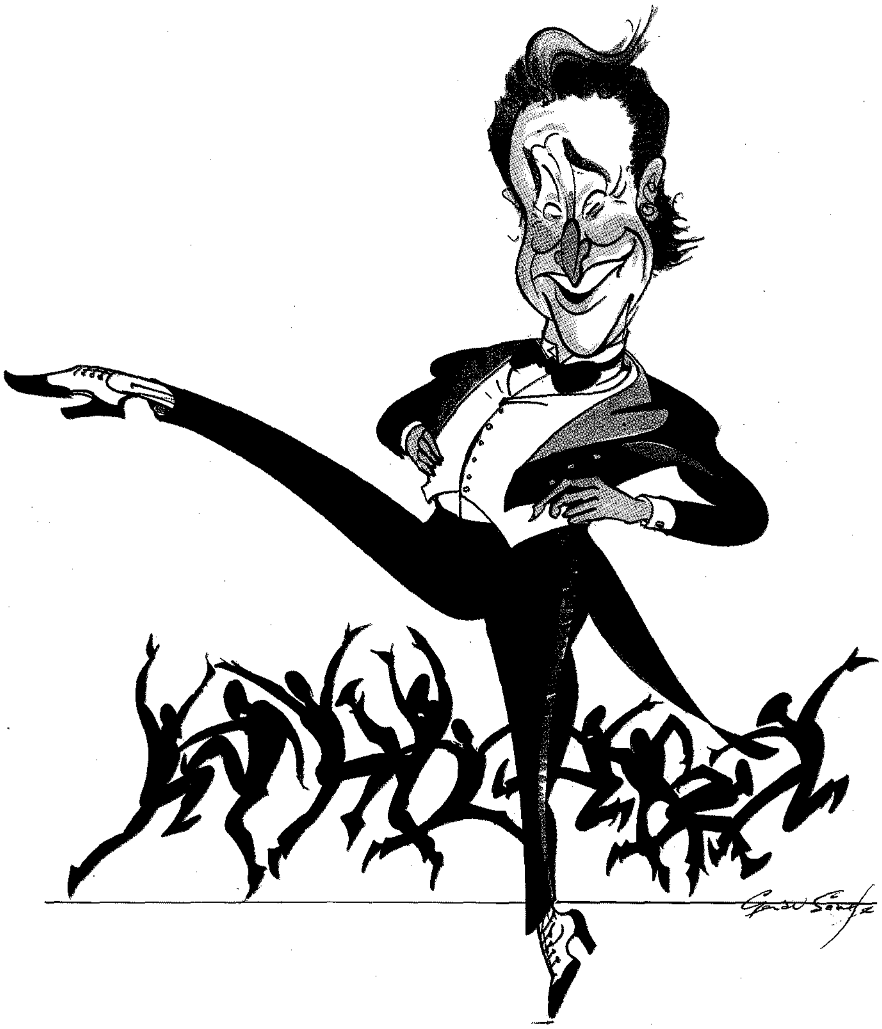
BY JOAN ACOCELLA

In 1999, Michael Flatley, the Irish-American step dancer, launched a new production by rising from the depths of a fiery lake on the grounds of a German castle. In his current show, "Celtic Tiger," which stopped for one night at Madison Square Garden last month, he merely danced onto the stage—accompanied by maybe forty or fifty other clattering tappers and a gigantic video projection of what appeared to be sunrise over Stonehenge—in a backless Roman-gladiator outfit. The crowd would no doubt have preferred a burning lake, but it roared anyway, and with reason. Flatley is an extraordinary dancer. According to his press bio, he has clocked thirty-five taps per second. I don't know how that's possible, but suffice it to say he's fast. More important is his musicality. Flatley can't walk, can't turn his head, except in relation to the beat. He is also a natural charm-boy: happy onstage, at home in his body. He looks like Bill Clinton, and if, like Clinton, he's had a few too many doughnuts, well, he's forty-seven now, and, to me, the embonpoint just makes him more appealing.

But, as those who saw his prior show "Lord of the Dance" will not be surprised to hear, "Celtic Tiger" is an orgy of flash and cheesiness. The basic content is supposedly Irish step dancing, and that alone is what is good in this extravaganza. Step dancing is a highly specific style: restrained in the upper body (arms down, spine straight) and wild in the lower body (wagging swings of the leg, sudden kicks and hops, not to speak of the stepping). Flatley, according to his program notes, has liberated this style from its "rigidity," adding arm movements and "heart-stopping rhythm." I didn't hear any heart-stopping rhythms; next to African dance, this is kindergarten rhythmically. As for the freed arms, they eliminate what was once an exciting contrast: containment upstairs, commotion downstairs. Another layer of nuance has been stripped away by Flatley's practice of having what seem like all his step dances done in hard shoes—that is, as tap dance. (Traditionalists perform some numbers in soft shoes.) In sum, everything subtle has been removed, in favor of everything knock 'em dead. Yet Flatley's version of step dancing, whether it is done by him solo or by his ensembles—in great, whirling arcs, in stage-wide lines of women crossing through lines of men—is still a thrilling business.

That is only a small portion of "Celtic Tiger," however. For much of the show, the dancers did dumbed-down Astaire or Fosse, or worse. At one point, four women in red lace body stockings slithered forward on the floor with their mouths open, as if they were about to perform an expensive sexual service on us. Then a group of priests ran in, grabbed the women, and threw them down a smoking hole in the stage, whence they presumably went straight to Hell.

What this had to do with the history of the Irish people, which was supposedly the subject of "Celtic Tiger," I don't know, but amid the show's technological assault even the historical numbers ("The 1916 Rising," etc.) were hard to get your brain around. The music and the stage floor were miked to the point where you felt you might need a doctor afterward. The performing area was flanked by two enormous video screens which, this being Madison Square Garden, projected in closeup what the audience might have difficulty seeing on the stage. And most of the acts looked better on the video screens than on the stage. From what I



GERALD SCARFE

Doing what he does best: Flatley goes for flash in "Celtic Tiger."

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can figure out, this wasn't primarily a live production. It was material for a video. (Flatley does very well with the videos of his shows. His press kit says that one had "sales in excess of nine times platinum.") The spirit, too, was that of TV: the relentless excitation, the boringly pretty girls, the unsexy sex. And, oh, the flag-waving! It all looked like something from Vegas or Disney World—no surprise, since Flatley has created productions for both those venues.

"Celtic Tiger" had one passage that I will never forget: Flatley dancing alone, for maybe a minute or two, in an enlarged silhouette that appeared on what looked like a red curtain. This was the showstopper, because it was just step dancing: one man doing the moves, to the rhythm. In a culminating irony, this, too, once I checked with the publicist, turned out to be a video. (The "curtain" was an L.E.D. screen.) But Flatley did the routine once, for the camera. Maybe he could do it again, for us. He has said that he wants to retire from touring. I wonder if, as a farewell gesture, he might forgo his accustomed mega-fees (in 1999, according to the "Guinness Book of Records," he was the highest-paid dancer in the world) and just put on a little show of Irish step dancing. It would be tremendous.

Modest little shows, however, are exactly what dancers working in old-world styles are now trying to get away from. This, I think, is the most interesting and poignant story in dance today: the effort of practitioners of traditional (formerly called "folk") forms to make a salable product out of their art. Anyone in New York who wants to see good dance on a regular basis should get a subscription to the World Music Institute, which holds most of its concerts at the Peter Norton Symphony Space, on upper Broadway. There you will see groups in the middle of the journey between "tradition" and what most American producers would call a show—that is, groups that have not yet unlearned the art of wholehearted dancing, to rhythmic music, in a simple setting. Members of such troupes often have day jobs. From Monday to Friday they fix cars; on weekends they dance, and they want an audience. Don't talk to these people about "authenticity." As they know, the styles you regard as authentic were developed not in the villages but at the dance competitions that, for many decades now, have been the primary showcase for their work. And if you found that out, and asked, say, some Irish dancers about the real thing, they would ask you which real thing: the thing done before Cromwell's troops invaded; or before the Irish soldiers came back from the Napoleonic wars, their heads filled with French quadrilles; or before the Irish Dancing Commission laid down the rules for Irish dance, in the nineteen-thirties and forties? They might also point out, as Hanay Geiogamah, the artistic director of the American Indian Dance Theatre, once did, that when you change a traditional dance you may actually improve it, "give it more pep." Advocates of authenticity sometimes seem to think that the repositories of that virtue were sitting around in grass huts until some latter-day P. T. Barnum drove up in a Cadillac and filled them full of naughty ideas. That is not the case. These people had TVs. They saw the Eurovision Song Contest and the Academy Awards, and they thought, Our dance is better than that. If we got nicer costumes and an amplifier, we could go big time.

There is barely a folk form, across the world, that is not undergoing this transformation. Sometimes the results are appalling. I recall the up-to-date sections of the Georgian State Dance Company's last New York performance with great pain. Earlier this month, Black Grace, a troupe from New Zealand, appeared at the New Victory with a number of beautiful, complicated Samoan-based dances followed by a fake Paul Taylor number. But who are we to say that traditional-dance groups shouldn't make such adjustments, when the alternative is to stay home and, once a year, place first in the slip-jig competition?

Who are we to say? The audience, that's who. There are adjustments and adjustments, and the difference between them is usually the presence of an artist. Notions of authenticity tend to evaporate in the face of a serious post-folk choreographer: for example, Surupa Sen in Odissi; Rennie Harris in hip-hop; Eva Yerbabuena in flamenco. These are people who, without making any special claims to authenticity, are developing something new that still honors the spirit of the old. In Flatley's shows, nothing is developed. Step dancing just wanders in and out, looking like a virgin in a whorehouse. ♦

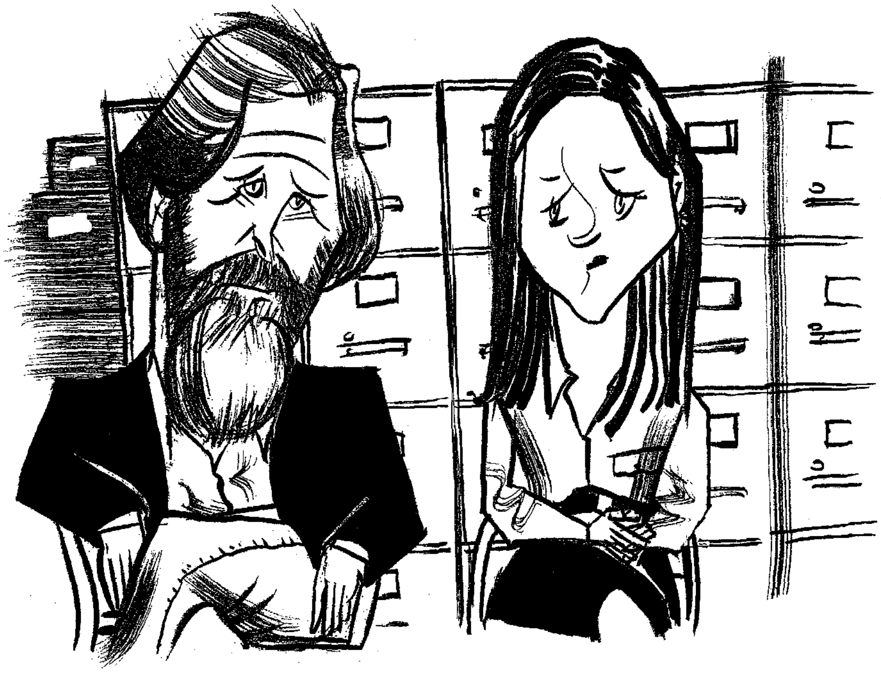
THE CURRENT CINEMA

FAMILY MATTERS

"The Squid and the Whale" and "Elizabethtown."

BY DAVID DENBY

When little kids look up, they see gods hovering over them. Parents are big, they make things appear and disappear, and they know just about everything, which is one reason kids keep secrets and tell lies—they need to claim a little power for themselves. As children get older, however, their parents seem less and less like gods. They may even seem grasping and dangerous—more like monsters. At the center of Noah Baumbach's remarkable "The Squid and the Whale" are two brothers—Walt (Jesse Eisenberg), who is sixteen, and a bright and fluent poseur, and Frank (Owen Kline), a twelve-year-old in a sexual uproar—and both boys, as they look at their parents, are caught between feelings of adoration and disgust. The time is 1986, in Brooklyn's Park Slope, the land of frontage-envy, fine old furniture, and dark-stained, well-stocked bookshelves. In these idyllic streets, the boys' parents, both writers, are breaking up and behaving badly. The dad, Bernard (Jeff Daniels), a college English teacher and an increasingly unsuccessful novelist, has become a sour and selfish liar; the mom, Joan (Laura Linney), can't stop leaving evidence of her love affairs around the house. Desolate over the breakup, and trying to hold on to their love for their parents, the boys fall into nutty imitative behavior. Walt parrots every one of his dad's huffy opinions; Frank reënacts his mom's indiscretions by rubbing his crotch against library shelves and depositing his substance on schoolbooks and lockers. "The Squid and the Whale" is a satirical comedy—ruthless and heartbreaking, but a comedy nonetheless. The movie is also about disintegration and the possibility of rebirth. In other words, it's a small miracle.



Jeff Daniels and Laura Linney as badly behaving parents in Noah Baumbach's film.

We are so used to seeing semi-verbal characters onscreen—taciturn Diesels and blank-eyed Pitts, funny goofs of both sexes—that, at first, the sound of fully articulate people may be a little embarrassing. "'This Side of Paradise' is

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minor Fitzgerald," Walt announces to a friendly girl at school, and he describes the ending of Kafka's "Metamorphosis" as . . . "Kafkaesque." Since Walt hasn't read either author, the lines are meant satirically, but some of us may wince as well as laugh. Listening to pompous Bernard, who puts down a local tennis pro as a nothing and patronizes "A Tale of Two Cities" to his son—who then says at dinner that he can't be bothered to read "minor Dickens"—educated moviegoers may feel a shock of recognition. It's a shock that's more like a sting. Is this what we're like at our most fatuous? Ranking every person and book so we won't be associated with anything suspected of being second-rate? The sting, however, gradually lessens without quite becoming a caress; it begins to feel like a way of observing closely.

Noah Baumbach, the thirty-six-year-old director of "Kicking and Screaming" (1995) and two other independent movies, draws on elements of his own life. He grew up in Brooklyn, and both his parents are writers. But the best qualifications in the world wouldn't have helped him if he didn't know what he was doing, and Baumbach gets some very tricky things exactly right: the way educated parents project both their self-love and their career anxieties onto their children; the way the kids respond to parental misconduct like pilot fish shimmying around a wayward shark. Baumbach has an irrepressibly critical eye. The movie is a fictionalized memoir: Walt is the artist as a young man, the filmmaker-writer-to-be, but, in Baumbach's telling, the autobiographical figure is no more protected than anyone else. Walt begins his artistic journey as a phony and a plagiarist; at a school talent show, he tries to pass off a Pink Floyd song as his own. The film's four principals are smart and wily, and yet they always get caught. The memoirist, of course, is the one tripping them up, but, in a project like this, memory must give way to convincing invention. Baumbach persuades us that the characters are so guilt-ridden and bound to one another emotionally that they don't really want to get away with anything.

Working with relatively inexpensive Super 16 film, Baumbach shot "The Squid and the Whale" in twenty-three days, mostly in a borrowed Park Slope house, for about a million and a half dollars. He's startlingly sure-footed. The main ideas are set up clearly and developed carefully—much more so than in "Junebug," another good family film. Yet there's nothing constricted about the form or the feel of the movie. Family arguments and conferences, and interactions between the boys and their friends, are staged simply and straightforwardly, yet many of these scenes, pointed and touching from the start, take off in surprising directions and come to a climax with a sudden rush of hostility or hurt. The tight editing, which often cuts off a character in need of reassurance or enlightenment, is itself a form of wit. Perhaps it's easier to create an organic form if you're making a film about people who have a lengthy shared history; what they say can naturally be fashioned into a single quilt of endearments, quarrels, jokes, and disappointments. Repeated phrases echo off the narrow walls of the Park Slope house; nothing gets lost—the cashew that Frank shoves up his nose at a dinner scene in the beginning pops out after one of his sessions with Onan and alcohol many scenes later. Louis Malle's scandalous family drama "Murmur of the Heart" (1971), which Baumbach credits as an influence, has a similar coherence, intimacy, and speed, and this is a middle-class American "Murmur"—not as daring or perverse, perhaps, but more tender and enveloping, and better acquainted with failure.

As Joan, Laura Linney is affectingly abashed, though she has one great moment of defiance: Bernard says that he wants to come back—he will reform, he will *cook*—and Linney erupts in uncontrollable laughter. As Jeff Daniels plays him, Bernard is a classic study in wounded narcissism. Daniels has a long, thick beard—not a sixties-style, free-spirit beard but a nineteenth-century, Old Testament beard—and he speaks in a toneless rumble. When someone assails him, his eyes narrow; the hostile glint that remains suggests that Bernard knows the truth about himself but is unable to grant it more than an instant's recognition. His disappointment makes him hell to be around, and treacherous, too. Walt, nearly drowning himself in the effort to keep his dad afloat, calls his mother a whore out of loyalty to his father's suffering. The plot hinges on Walt's rediscovery of his love for her; Baumbach, in the end, holds out the possibility that Walt, at least, will see his parents as neither gods nor monsters but as screwed-up, very foolish adults. The movie is proof that Walt grew into a man.

"Elizabethtown," which cost roughly forty times as much as "Squid," leaves one adrift on a raft of morose questions. How could this vacuous movie have got made? Didn't anyone at Paramount, which paid for the film, read the script? And also: What in the world has happened to Cameron Crowe? After two charming early films about Gen X dating habits, "Say Anything . . ." (1989) and "Singles" (1992), and the hard-driving and enormously enjoyable "Jerry Maguire" (1996), Crowe's instinct for storytelling appears to have evaporated. "Vanilla Sky," from 2001, was overwrought piffle—a Tom Cruise vanity project—which only reinforced the squishy impression left the year before by "Almost Famous," a semi-autobiographical film so tepid that it never quite worked up a head of steam. "Elizabethtown" doesn't get going at all. It's about a handsome young man from Oregon, Drew (Orlando Bloom), who loses a fortune for an international sneaker company by designing a silly shoe. Drew gets fired—and then his father dies. He's in deep trouble, yet he can't feel a thing. He travels to his father's birthplace, Elizabethtown, Kentucky, and confronts the enormous family of busybodies that his dad left behind decades ago. But these are his father's people, not Drew's, and he walks through the noisy family gatherings in a bemused fog. On the plane to Kentucky, however, he meets a chipper flight attendant, Claire (Kirsten Dunst), who wants to bring him to life. Crowe is attempting a modern screwball comedy—the kind of thing that, sixty years ago, Howard Hawks, directing Gary Cooper and Barbara Stanwyck, would have turned into romantic farce—but he has scaled the movie as an epic and turned his gabby heroine into a fount of New Age wisdom. Claire tells Drew to embrace his failure, and she and Drew have many conversations about the nature of existence.

At times, the movie became so boring that I experienced the uncanny sensation that I could physically feel the film passing through the projector. As I counted sprocket holes, my sense of what the movie was "about" simply dissolved, and the projector threw onto the screen meaningless images of children screaming, a memorial service going awry, landscapes unfurling outside a car window. Kirsten Dunst, with her cocked head and eyetoothy smile, is spirited enough, but, try as she might, she can't animate Orlando Bloom. This is one sleeping beauty whom no kiss will ever awaken. ♦

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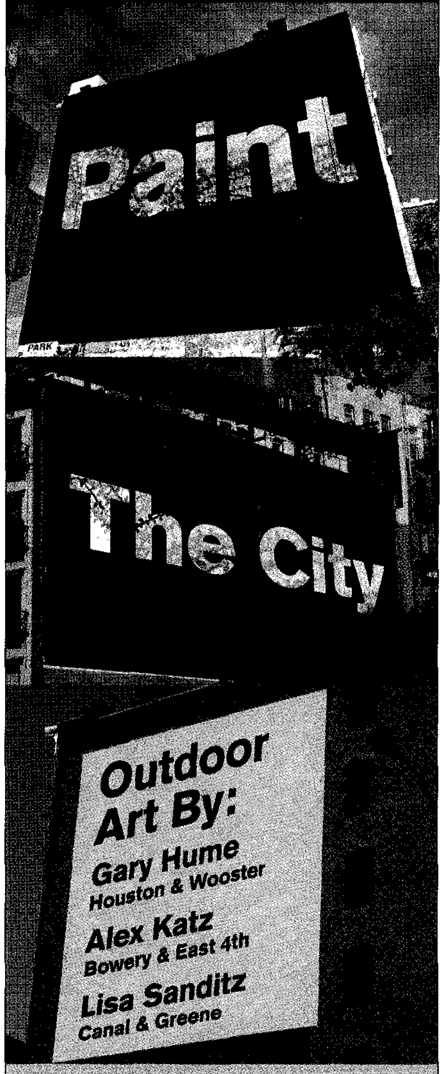

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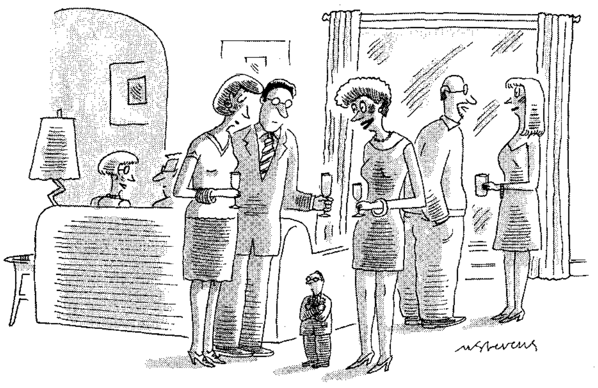
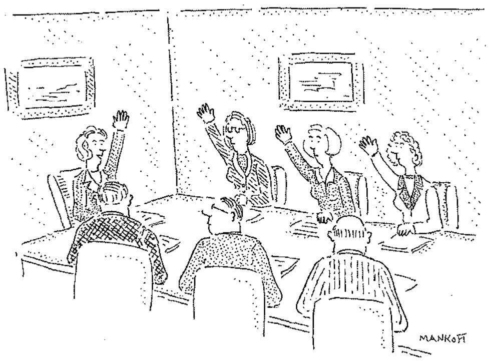
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Gahan Wilson, must be received by Sunday, October 23rd. Finalists in the October 10th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the November 7th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"We met at the minibar."
Paul Cretien, Waco, Texas



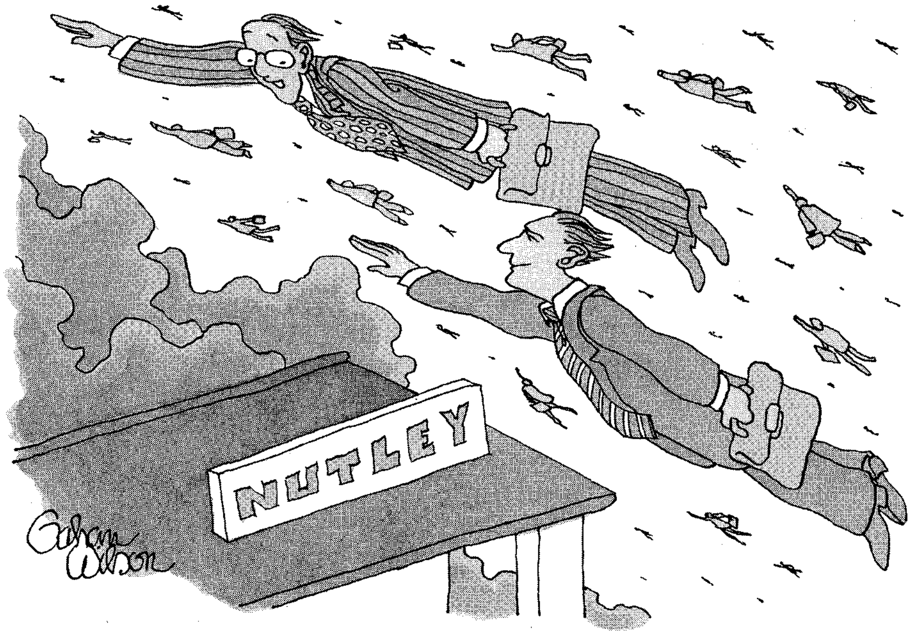
THE FINALISTS

"Well, then, it's unanimous."
Anne Whiteside, San Francisco, Calif.

"So that settles it. This year, instead of cooking the books, we'll bake them in a light, flaky pastry."
Michael Hirson, Washington, D.C.

"Who else found Gary's report a little too angry, white, and male?"
Grant Ruple, Morristown, N.J.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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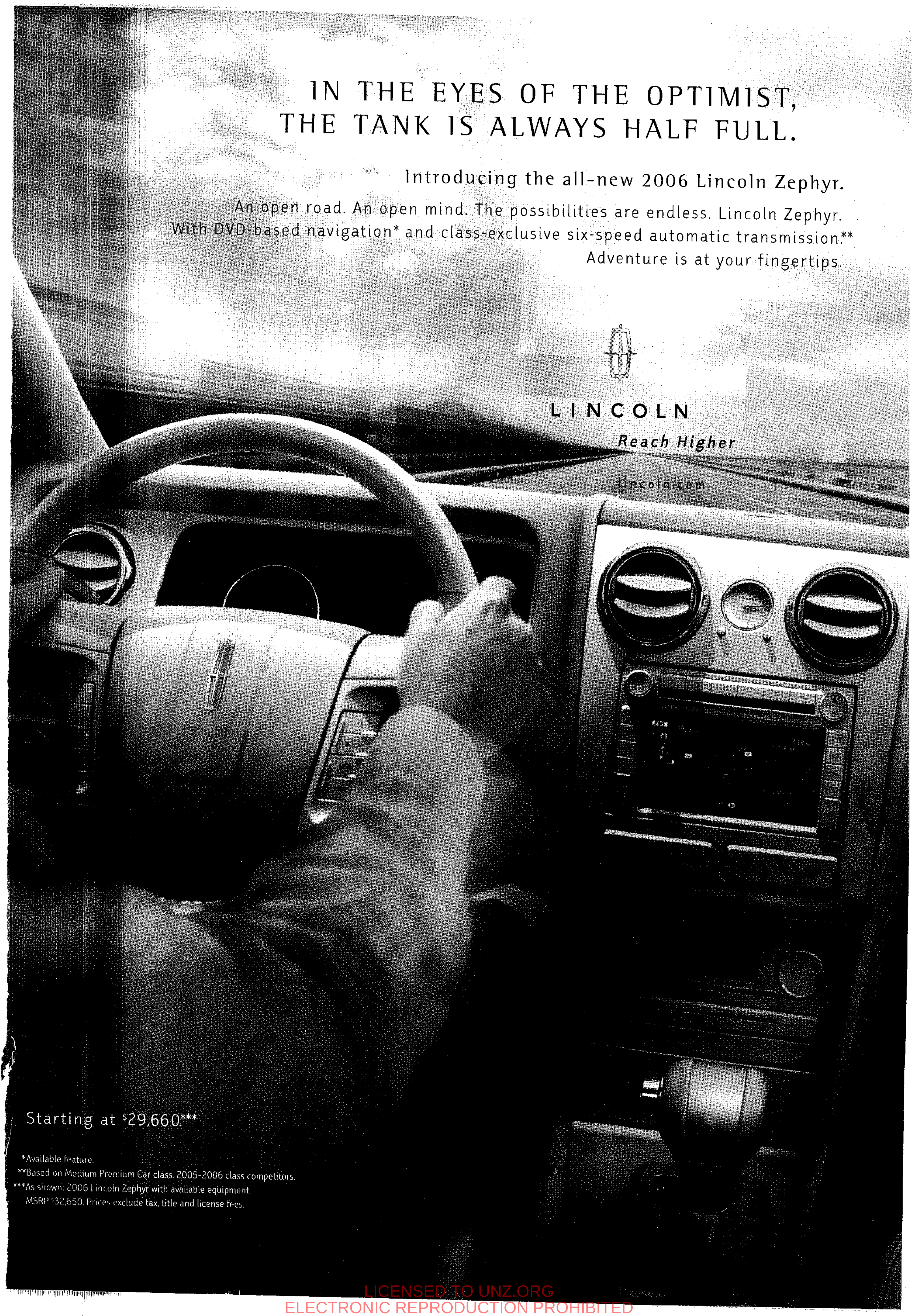

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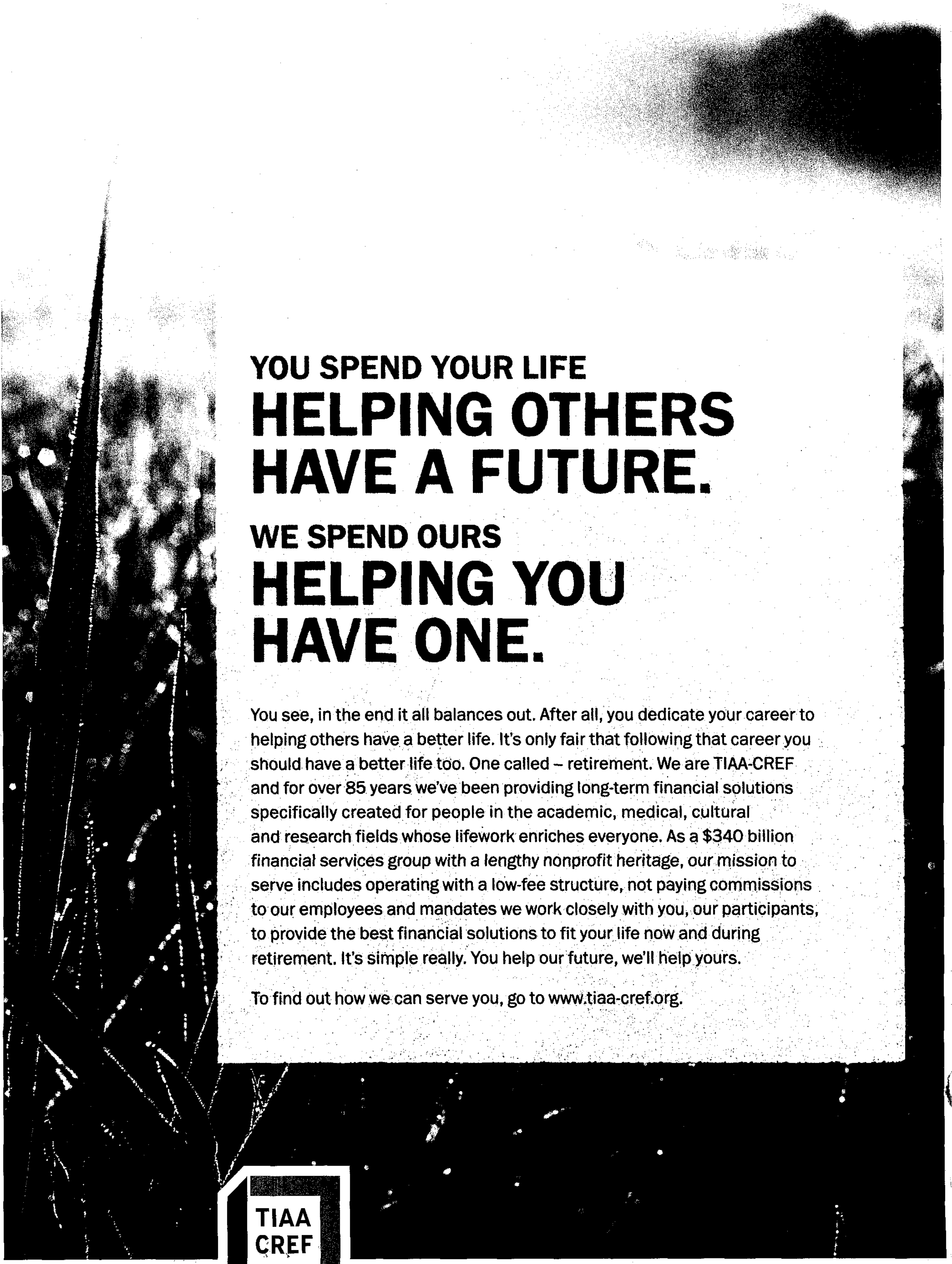

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WE SPEND OURS HELPING YOU HAVE ONE.

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